

MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT • MAXIMO

Lifecycle 2 Vol3 #10 10/01

Next Generation Magazine

→ NextGen

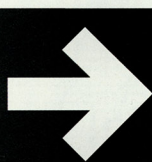
Dead or Alive 3

Is this the game
that will make you
buy an Xbox?

UNBELIEVABLE!
**ACTUAL
SCREENSHOT**
OF DOA3



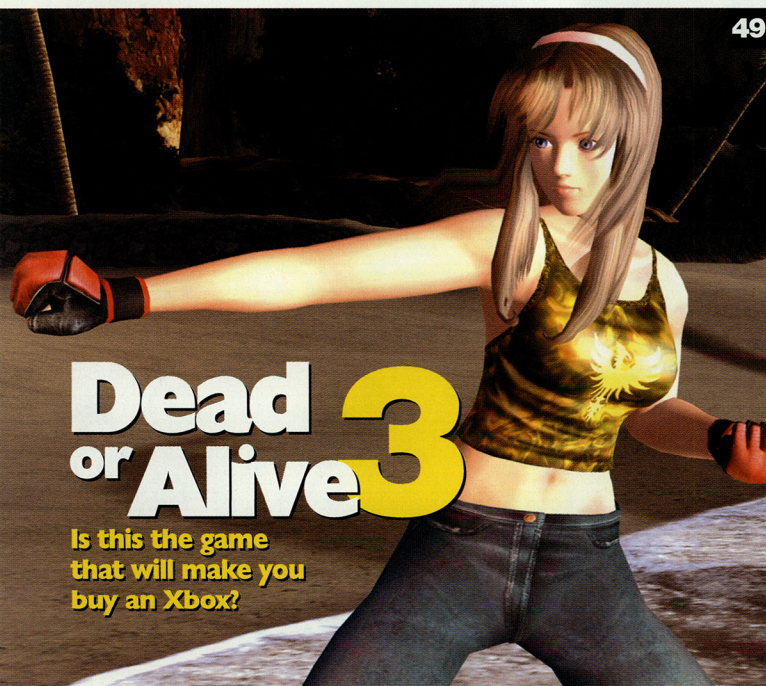
GameCube ■ PlayStation 2 ■ Xbox ■ PC ■ Dreamcast



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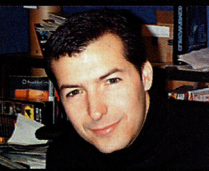
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EDITORIAL

Fighting the good fight



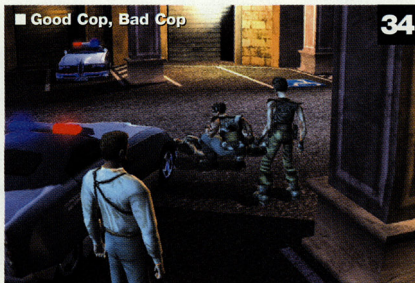
Last month, we suggested Xbox might have a lemon of a launch, but things are changing. Why? We've seen *Dead or Alive 3*, a game that really delivers on the promises of Microsoft's system. In the transition to Xbox, this fighting series (once considered a *Virtua Fighter* wannabe) has become a major player — a visual masterpiece that raises the bar above Sega's and Namco's fighting games. We bring you all-new screenshots and the first hands-on report no fighting fan should miss. You'll find the story here, and only here, on page 49.

On PC, you can expect an entirely different kind of fight. *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault* puts you in the thick of WWII, dropping you on Omaha Beach and commanding you to move inland. Yes, it's just like in *Saving Private Ryan*, and just as terrifying. The invasion starts on page 22.

Finally, we've compiled a list of the 25 most powerful people in this industry. These elite few decide not only what games get made, but where games will go in the coming years. And we've included an exclusive interview with the most powerful of them all. I had to go all the way to Tokyo for this — all you have to do is turn to page 64. Ken Kutaragi is waiting there for you.

Tom
— Tom Russo

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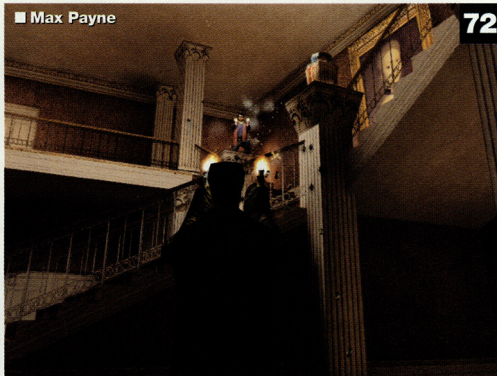
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News

Game industry news and analysis



■ INSIDE THE X-FACTORY

READY FOR X-PORT

Microsoft's factories in Mexico and Hungary are pumping out Xbox consoles



As you read this, factories on both sides of the world are pumping out Xbox consoles for the November 8, 2001 U.S. launch. The Flextronics manufacturing plant in Guadalajara, Mexico (shown above) is where both the Xbox motherboard and final console assembly occurs, while another plant in Hungary houses two individual

facilities for each part. Both plants combined employ roughly 7,000 people and take up more than a million square feet of space. Each factory will support the North American launch, with the Hungarian plant switching over to support the Q1 2002 European launch and ongoing production. The Mexico facility was built



specifically for Xbox, with five board- and five box-production lines. But despite the obvious activity, **Next Gen** would feel a lot better if we saw stacks of assembled Xboxes.

Microsoft contracted out the manufacturing to Flextronics to take advantage of its mass-component purchasing power — the Hungarian plant also manufactures other products — but will still incur hardware losses. Earlier this year, a Merrill Lynch report included an analysis estimating each Xbox costs about \$375 to produce. If all 600,000 launch units sell at retail for \$299, Microsoft could quickly find itself with a loss of \$45 million in the U.S. alone. That's excruciating just to think about.

— Kevin Toyama

■ CAN WE COME IN AND PLAY?

PlayStation 2's Taking Gamers Online... But At What Price?

The game industry faces the challenges of building PlayStation 2's online network

➔ When the \$39.99 PlayStation 2 network adapter is released in November, gamers will have access to online multiplayer functionality in games such as *Tony Hawk 3* and *Twisted Metal Black Online*. Other online-compatible games have suffered delays, and there's been no official word from Sony on its online plans. What exactly should gamers expect when a control-driven company like Sony gives its customers access to something as uncontrollable as the Internet?

SONY'S WAY OR THE HIGHWAY

Our sources indicate Sony is planning a closed network for PlayStation 2, where Sony would create a secure portal through which companies can offer everything from games to movies. Sony would authenticate each PS2 connecting to the network, then redirect the gamer to either an independent or Sony-run server.

Sony's online-authentication process will put the company in charge of the content flow; if content providers don't play by Sony's rules, their access to gamers will be denied. And count on those rules being as rigid as those currently governing

exclusive content. Despite companies talking about cross-platform gaming, the harsh truth is that Sony won't allow a GameCube or Xbox gamer to play *Madden* against a PS2 owner; Sony would rather force gamers to buy a PS2 if they

"Sony's going to be the vault keeper, so that means we're going to have to pay them a fee, and that's where they make their money."

— Rob Dyer, president, Eidos Interactive

disc-based content. By restricting the content flow, Sony will keep out adult-themed material that can tarnish its image, as well as ensure that Sony gets a cut from any revenue generated from downloads — a cost to publishers that will surely be passed on to the gamer.

A closed network would also limit cross-platform gaming. Exclusive content sells systems, and PS2's online network is

want to play against other PS2 owners online.

Gamers may also have to change their ISPs, as several industry execs expect Sony to purchase an ISP and make its network accessible only through previously announced partner AOL and the speculated Sony-owned ISP. This scenario would allow Sony to reach casual gamers through AOL, as well as

(continued on page 10)



■ *Tony Hawk 3* will enable four simultaneous skaters to play online, and future versions could increase that number to emulate a real skate park



■ Square's online-only Final Fantasy XI is reason enough for many FF fans to buy Sony's network adapter

(continued from page 9)
hardcore gamers who likely find AOL's mass-market approach to the Internet unappealing.

SCEI President Ken Kutaragi is clearly supplying the online puzzle pieces (see Feature, page 64), but it's apparent that it'll be the game companies that decide how the pieces fit together in their games.

WHO'S THE KEYMASTER?

As of this writing, Sony had not announced a specific hard-drive price or launch date for the U.S. — in Japan, the hard drive sells for \$145 and includes a built-in network adapter — which would be a necessity

to sell downloadable content. But Eidos President Rob Dyer already plans to offer episodic games, where consumers would buy and download the next chapter of a continuing story. Dyer says that writers are already working on story arcs for titles such as *Tomb Raider* and *Soul Reaver*, which Eidos will cut into chapters. But those games won't be housed within the Eidos walls.

"Sony's going to be the vault keeper," says Dyer. "so we're going to have to pay them a fee, and that's where they make their money. I don't want a big server farm; it takes a huge amount of money and a lot

of people. I'm willing to pay [Sony's] fee because it's the cost of doing business, and it's cheaper than doing it myself."

Not all publishers are so quick to accept Sony's fee. "In theory," explains

because Sony has made a huge investment in researching, developing, and marketing its platform. When you're talking online, it's harder to justify this cost because we've already subsidized the cost of the

"It's funny to watch companies say that the [online] market isn't mature enough for them to step in yet. When they come, they'll get their ass handed to them."

— Kelly Flock, president, Sony Online

Universal Interactive VP of Technology Neal Robison, "the royalty payment on a disc helps pay for the cost of developing the platform; the only reason your software will work is

hardware [with past and present disc-based games] — do we subsidize the cost of the Internet?"

Still, Robison is willing to pay a fee if Sony creates a portal through which pub-

lishers can make games available, as long as Sony takes on the responsibility of marketing the site and drawing customers. But some companies hope that instead of laying down one "take it or leave it" system, Sony will roll out options.

"Smaller companies," suggests Namco Director of Business Development Mike Fischer, "could rely on Sony to set up the servers and handle traffic, billing, etc. so they could focus just on game content. Larger publishers might choose to invest in this infrastructure themselves. My hope would be that they offer publishers a choice."

SMOKE, OR TCP/IP STACKS?

Sony is taking its online plans seriously, looking beyond the present and laying down a foundation to accommodate massive numbers of online consoles through its partnership with Cisco. A new Internet protocol software has been developed that will go into PlayStation 2 SDKs.

"Without getting too technical," explains SCEA Producer Hunter Luisi, "everything that connects to the Internet needs its own ID number. With everyone using the Ipv4 [standard],

■ BITS FROM THE EDGE

News Bytes

→ It's nice to know some things never change — like Acclaim. In late July, the publisher that's had more financial ups and downs than a season of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* put together an additional \$33.6 million in financing from a private sale of stock. Good for them. Then, less than three days later, they turned right around and promptly announced they would be spending a full \$4 million of that on promoting *Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2*. Nice to know that

no matter how tough times may get, they still can't resist the big splash over there at Acclaim...

In the "Nietzsche was right after all" department, Mike Wilson's stab at independent publishing for the game industry, *Gathering of Developers* (a.k.a. *GodGames*), is dead. Shortly after the release of *Max Payne*, Wilson handed off all remaining assets to Take 2, gathered up everyone in the office, and began gearing up for *SubstanceTV*, a non-game-related, DVD-based

magazine. And so a noble experiment fails, although whether because of bad management or just because it was an idea this industry wasn't ready for yet will be for history to decide. So who's going to fill the parking lot with strip-pers and midgets at next year's E3?

Interplay's worries are far from over, however. Apparently, only *Baldur's Gate* and its expansion packs have made any money in the last year. Its RPG subsidiary *Black Isle* has shut down the long-in-

development-and-rumored-to-be-in-trouble-for-almost-that-long *Torn*, and the lack of funds even spread clear around the globe to Microforte, the Australian developer of *Fallout Tactics*, which found itself with zero cash. No word yet on what this means for *Citizen Zero*, Microforte's MMORPG, which actually has (had?) some buzz.

It used to be licensing strategy guides, but now we've struck upon the latest way for publishers to make money.

we're rapidly running out of ID numbers. By using the Cisco stack [that supports IPv6], we are supporting the future standard for how devices will connect to each other."

Of course, pouring the foundation for online gamers doesn't mean gamers will come. Dreamcast proved that if you don't have enough content to attract a significant installed base, you're out of luck. What may provide the incentive to get gamers on the network is the online-only game *Final Fantasy XI*. Square's offline RPGs have sold millions of copies, and FF fans are so fanatical that many will buy the network adapter despite the added investment. Bundling FFXI with Sony's network adapter would be one way to help establish a respectable online installed base.

Square isn't the only company planning persistent-world RPGs. Sony Online plans to expand the success it's had with *EverQuest* to the console, and warns that the longer

companies wait to enter the market, the harder it will be for them to find success.

"Having been a little bleeding-edge the last couple of years," says Sony Online President Kelly Flock, "it's funny to watch companies say that the [online] market isn't mature enough for them to step in yet. When they come, they'll get their ass handed to them. It was interesting to see Mr. Miyamoto say he has absolutely no intention of making a *Zelda* online game. It's exactly the right thing for someone like him to say because [online is] not an expertise he has or knows. It takes a completely different kind of mindset to do it."

LIVE PS2 WIRE

Once Sony launches the PS2 online infrastructure and develops an installed base, the true fruits of an online console network will unfold.

Companies have already planned innovative ways to leverage the online network beyond simple multiplayer

functionality from the aforementioned downloadable games and persistent worlds to truly new gaming experiences.

"Part of our technology plan integrates videoconferencing and voice-over-IP technology into the game experience," shares Universal Interactive's Robison. "That [new game experience] can be realized on PS2 with a broadband connection, where you can see a video and audio representation of the opponent."

WORTH THE TROUBLE

Sony Online's Flock thinks PS2's installed base has the potential for 40 to 50 million units in North America, and if he can reach even 5% of that market, he'll reach far more than his current subscriber base. With so much untapped potential on the horizon, it's easy to see why game companies are so excited about developing new features and experiences for gamers — providing that Sony lets them.

— Kevin Toyama



■ Welcome to the jungle: SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs will be online on PS2 sometime in the winter

Sierra announced an "open" beta test for its hotly anticipated RTS *Empire Earth*. So, what did you have to do to participate in this "open" test? Why, just pre-order the game, that's all — and of course pay for it. Then you pick up your "special beta testing copy" at your participating retail store. Between this and Funcom's troubles with *Anarchy Online*, it looks like getting the public to pay for beta software is getting to be all the rage this year.

ECTS MIA? Not exactly, but it's getting mighty close. Held in London every fall, Europe's largest industry trade show has been shrinking for the past several years, but in 2001 it's finally gotten smaller than the Ant Farm Retailers World Expo. Neither Sony, Nintendo, nor Microsoft will be exhibiting there. Sony and Nintendo each run their own trade shows for Europe, and Electronic Arts has been doing

the same for a couple of seasons now. Even U.K. native and traditional booth hog *Eidos* is skipping out. Who does that leave? Mostly Ubi Soft and German publisher CDV (the ultimate source here for a pair of good RTS games, *Cossacks* and *Sudden Strike*, but also publisher of the Euro hit "erotik" series, *Wet* — *The Sexy Empire*). Hmm, what do crickets with English accents sound like? **NextGen**

■ BEWARE, THEY LIVE

Classic Games Expo 2001

Old programmers, old games, and old Vegas — classic to the core



■ The Activision crew (left), Intellivision Productions (top), and members of the *Dragon's Lair* team (bottom left)

THE NEW CLASSICS

Among the videogame celebrities of the past, a new breed of young programmers has managed to create new games for the classic systems. This year, the Expo hosted several new releases for Atari 2600 and ColecoVision, including previously undiscovered games from the '80s and newly coded products (denoted below by the fact that we've listed the authors). Here are some highlights:



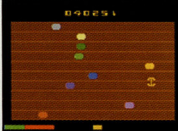
■ *Venture 2: The Abysmal Abyss* by Tim Snider



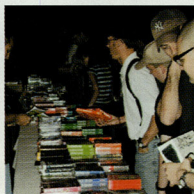
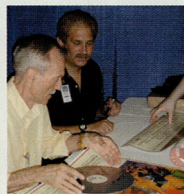
■ *Elevator Action*



■ *Combat Two*



■ *SCSlide* by Joe Grand



→ The fourth annual Classic Games Expo, held on August 11-12 at the Plaza hotel in downtown Las Vegas, wasn't your average convention. The show was much smaller than other industry shows — around 1,000 tickets were purchased — but had an intimacy that greatly benefited the true classic game fans in attendance. At any given time you could walk the show floor and meet some of the greatest designers from the past. Old-school luminaries such as Activision co-founders David Crane and Alan Miller were out and about and more than happy to talk about the Atari 2600 days. Other 8-bit gaming celebrities included Stormfront founder Don Daglow (*Utopia*, *Racing Destruction Set*), Keith Robinson (*Trojan Solar Sailor*), Garry Kitchen (*Keystone Kapers*, *Pressure Cooker*), Jeff Harris (*Atari Jawbreaker* and *Frogger*), and many more.

The reunion of the original *Dragon's Lair* team (Don Bluth, Rick Dyer, Gary Goldman, and John Pomeroy) proved a major highlight of the show. Besides

hosting an autograph session for their legions of fans, the group held a panel discussing the history behind the game. Lucky fans who attended the session not only got to see some concept art from the new *Dragon's Lair* movie, but also some footage of the upcoming PC game *Dragon's Lair 3D*.

While many people came just to browse the dealer tables, the greatest attraction at the show was the classic gaming museum — the most impressive array of rare and unreleased gaming paraphernalia in the world (a color Vectrex?). Of course, the 40+ arcade games (including a fairly comprehensive collection of Laserdisc games) gave attendees something to do once their gaming juices were flowing.

Overall, the limited attendance only added to the intimacy and mystique of Classic Gaming Expo 2001. And just wait until next year: With Atari's 30th anniversary on the horizon, the show's promoters have promised something big. We wouldn't miss it for the world. — Blake Fischer

GameCube Watch

10/01

Nintendo's next-generation console readies for release

→ Though at times difficult to understand, Nintendo always has a plan. At E3 2001 it consciously decided not to highlight under-development titles *Zelda* and *Mario*. It didn't show a playable *Metroid*, just an FMV mock-up of the game in development by Texas-based Retro Studios. It showed *Super Smash Bros. Melee*, *Wave Race: Blue Storm*, and *Luigi's Mansion*, smiled, and disappeared once more behind the curtains. Again, the company isn't talking. But behind the scenes, the plan moves forward.

Retro Falls Apart, Metroid Comes Together

On July 19, employees working on Retro Studios'

post-apocalyptic, 3D RPG *Raven Blade* came to work and learned that the project, in development for two years, had been terminated. Nintendo pulled the plug on it and forced the layoffs of an additional 30 team members (in February Retro killed two other projects and axed 30 people). Once a 100-person-plus studio working on four games, Retro now employs approximately 45 — with every last person focused on *Metroid Prime*. The good news is that the reorganization seems to be

paying off: Overseer Shigeru Miyamoto recently took a look at the 3D first-person adventure and was, allegedly, extremely pleased. Considering that Retro is aiming to ship the title in the third quarter of 2002, it's about time.

Rune the Day

Although this story was filed before Spaceworld 2001, we learned that one of the surprise playable titles will be *Rune*, courtesy of Japanese developer From Software (not to be confused with the PC title *Rune* developed by Human Head). From Software has historically been a big Sony supporter with such offer-

ings as *King's Field* and *Armored Core*. *Rune* is described as an RPG in which players summon monsters by collecting and utilizing in-game cards. The screenshot provided is early, although *Rune* is scheduled to be available in Japan during the first half of 2002.

The Sega Factor

Sega has already announced that it is working on 10 projects for GameCube, but what about plans to work with Nintendo on a game? Rumors have been flying about just such a product since E3. Peter Moore, Sega's president in the U.S., recently took time to address them. "I think that's just wishful thinking," said Moore when asked about a much speculated Sega/Nintendo joint RPG. "But if I got a phone call at four o'clock this afternoon



■ Our monthly GameCube Watch columnist, Matt Casamassina, is the editor-in-chief of IGNGameCube.com

from Japan that said they were doing it, it wouldn't surprise me in the least. We have a great relationship with NCL all the way to Yamauchi-san, who has great regard for Sega and what we've done over the years. There is also an incredible mutual respect, particularly between Naka and Miyamoto. Have we done anything? No. Are they talking about it? I'm sure. Have we announced anything? No. Might we? I bet you that we do." Take what you will from that. Sega and teams will appear at Spaceworld, and of course, we expect some announcements to be made — but you'll have to wait until next month's issue for details.

"We have a great relationship with [Nintendo] all the way to Yamauchi-san, who has great regard for Sega..."

— Peter Moore, president, Sega of America



■ *Rune*, a new RPG for GC, is headed this way in 2002 from From Software, which you might remember from *King's Field*

Namco Connection

One company that has forever been considered a Nintendo rival is coming back on board in a big way. By the time you read this, Namco should have announced several projects for GameCube, including a port of the PlayStation 2 title *Dead to Rights*, an enhanced version of *Klonoa 2*, and a translation of the Namco arcade racer *Smashing Drive*. All that, plus a certain fighting franchise sequel we believe will be *Soul Calibur 2*.

NextGen

In the Studio

Development news as it develops



GAMECUBE GOES TO GOTHAM CITY

→ It looks like Ubi Soft just can't stop with the announcements. The company now intends to bring *Batman Vengeance* (already in development for PS2) along with Disney's *Tarzan* to GameCube.

ACTIVISION GETS DICK

→ Through an agreement with Fox Interactive and DreamWorks, Activision has acquired the rights to publish and develop games based on Steven Spielberg's next sci-fi action-adventure flick, *Minority Report*. The film is based on a story by noted author Philip K. Dick, who also penned the stories that became the films *Blade Runner* and *Total Recall*. Spielberg is directing the film starring Tom Cruise; it will be released in theaters during the summer of 2002. The games are scheduled to appear on PC, PS2, Xbox, GameCube, and Game Boy Advance.

SYPHON FILTER GOES ONLINE

→ *Syphon Filter 3* won't be remembered for capping the PlayStation series with a bang (we're hearing it's got issues — and we're not talking about copies of Next Generation). And it's no secret *Syphon Filter* is in development for PS2. But what hasn't been reported is that the game will include a large multiplayer online component not unlike the one found in *SOCOM*, Sony's Navy Seal-based PS2 game. *SOCOM*'s E3 demo included its online multiplayer mode. In fact, we wouldn't be surprised if *SOCOM*'s online technology became the test foundation for *Syphon Filter* online.

STRAIGHT OUTTA QUAKECON

→ What originally began as a massive LAN party for fans of id's games, the fifth annual *Quake* convention (a.k.a. *QuakeCon*) became the place for several important id-related announcements. Aside from showing more *Doom* footage that wasn't released to the press, the company announced that Raven Software (*Jedi Knight II*, *Soldier of Fortune 2*) will develop *Quake IV* with help from id on the *Doom* engine. Another id collaboration involves Nerve Software. Former id designer/Nerve founder Brandon James has begun work on an untitled, team-based, multiplayer game. Of course, no release dates have been given. Oh, and finally, Trent Reznor will provide *Doom*'s music. Cool.

■ STICKING IT TO PS2

TopMax Dominator 2

Can this PlayStation 2 arcade stick carve out its own niche?

Manufacturer: TopMax

MSRP: \$39.99

→ With great 2D fighters like *Guilty Gear X* and *Capcom vs. SNK 2: Millennium Fight* finally beginning to arrive on PlayStation 2, it's time to get yourself an arcade stick. The reigning king of PS2 sticks is Interact's five-star *ShadowBlade* (see **NG 06/01**), but TopMax's *Dominator 2* offers a competent, cheaper alternative. It's smaller and lighter, but has a longer cord and adds a welcome rumble feature to the ball of the solidly built joystick. This stick can also switch from digital to analog functionality, though it feels a bit sloppy as a result when compared with the *ShadowBlade*'s silky-smooth action. Also, while each individual button can be set to turbo fire, the *Dominator 2* does not enable the player to program macros, a highly regarded feature to many fighting game fans.

Bottom Line: This is an excellent stick, with weaknesses that only surface when compared with the best product on the market. But it's still number two.

Rating: ★★★★★

■ If you're a PS2-owning shooter fanatic struggling to subsist on *Gradius III* & *IV* and *Silpheed: The Lost Planet*, this stick has features you'll love

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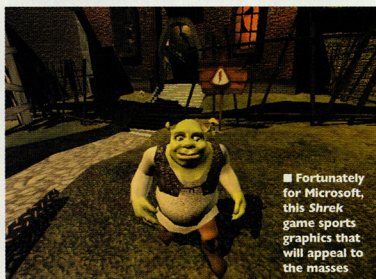
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10/01

The X-philes



Solving for X

→ While T.S. Eliot said April is the cruellest month, for Microsoft the cruellest month may be November — specifically this November. In what looks to be one of the richest 30-day periods in the history of videogames, Nintendo will launch a new console with a handful of high-quality (and highly anticipated) games. Sony will unleash *Metal Gear Solid 2*, *Tony Hawk 3*, *Jak and Daxter*, *Devil May Cry*, and others.

Into that very crowded parade, Microsoft is going to try to elbow its way with

a large, expensive box that lacks a clear killer app at launch. Has it lost already? Not necessarily. North American developers are working hard at making games for Xbox, though admittedly, some of these great-looking titles such as *Morrowind*, *Thief 3*, *Deus Ex 2*, and *Neverwinter Nights* (though Bioware won't utter a peep about that) are also coming to PC.

Microsoft does have a

Into a very crowded parade, Microsoft is going to try to elbow its way with a large, expensive box without a killer app.

chance of staying competitive. A couple surprise games from Japan may make launch, including the mysterious *Double S.T.E.A.L.*, and (finally) a potential system seller, *Dead or Alive 3* (see cover story, page 49). Some other unannounced Xbox titles are coming from talented developers as Tim Schafer, Hal Barwood, and Peter Molyneux, though again, this powerhouse group has spent most of its time working on PC titles.

Microsoft claims that there are 80 exclusive titles in the works, with nearly 40 of them coming from third parties. Well, they better get here in a hurry. Currently Microsoft suffers from too many second-place titles. Sony has snatched up *Tekken*, *Crazy Taxi*, and *Virtua Fighter*, while Xbox gets *Jet Grind Radio Future*, *Panzer*

Dragon, and *Gun Valkyrie*. As for Microsoft's first-party attempts at console games, we have a wait-and-see attitude. Right now Microsoft has a growing selection of great-looking games that are unlikely to sell consoles by themselves. *Munch's Oddysee*, *Malice*, and *New Legends* are probably all going to be a ton of fun, but they aren't going to move a ton of Xboxes.

One thing Xbox continues to have going for it is that every new game we see looks more spectacular than the last. The most recent surprise was TDK's console debut with *Shrek*. Luckily for Microsoft, *Shrek* was one of the top-grossing films of the summer. It also helps that the game is simply gorgeous, with bump-mapping, self-shadowing, multiple light sources, and all the jargon you need to call a game visually superb. We're not certain there's a real game there yet, but Microsoft sure needs one soon.

3000 Games at Launch?

Many have prophesied that Xbox will be the most hacked console in the history of the industry, and that is starting to come true already. An anonymous



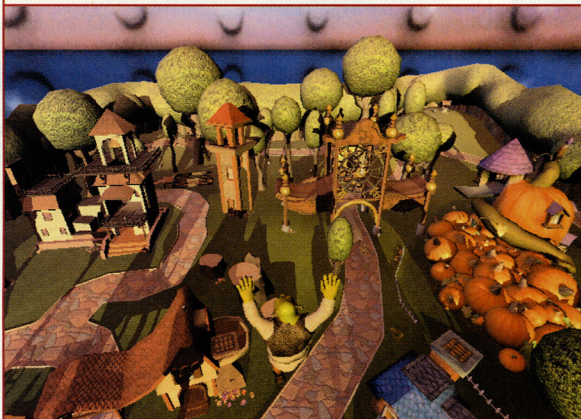
■ X-philes columnist Jim Preston is the Previews/Disc Editor at PC Gamer

Xbox developer has ported the latest version of MAME (Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator) over to an Xbox dev kit.

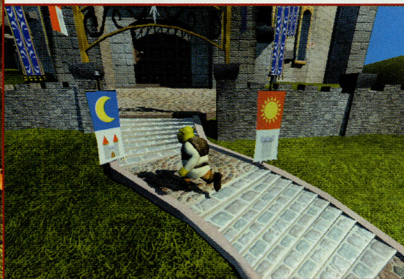
For the uninitiated, MAME is a program that lets you play more than 3000 arcade and Neo Geo games on your PC. According to the mystery hacker, MAME works great on Xbox, and most of the games work just fine within its 64MB RAM limitation.

There are additional emulators out there for everything from Atari 2600 to N64 that could also be tweaked onto Xbox. And who wouldn't want nearly the entire history of gaming available on a couple of DVDs? The problem, of course, is that unless each game was licensed individually, such a collection would be highly illegal. And the Xbox needs legal killer apps in order to survive.

NextGen



■ Shrek's lighting, bump-mapping, and pixel-shading are very impressive. However, there was very little gameplay in the demo version shown here



→ Alphas

Next Generation takes to the front lines of game development and brings you these exclusive previews

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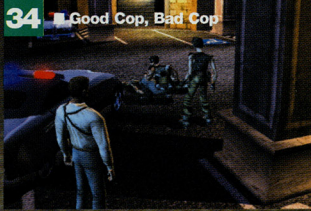
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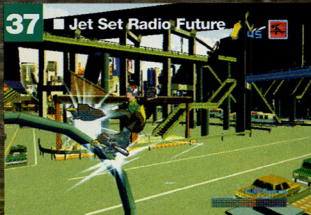
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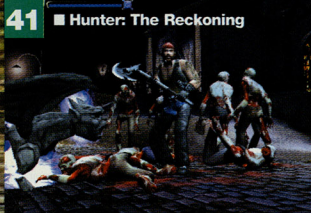
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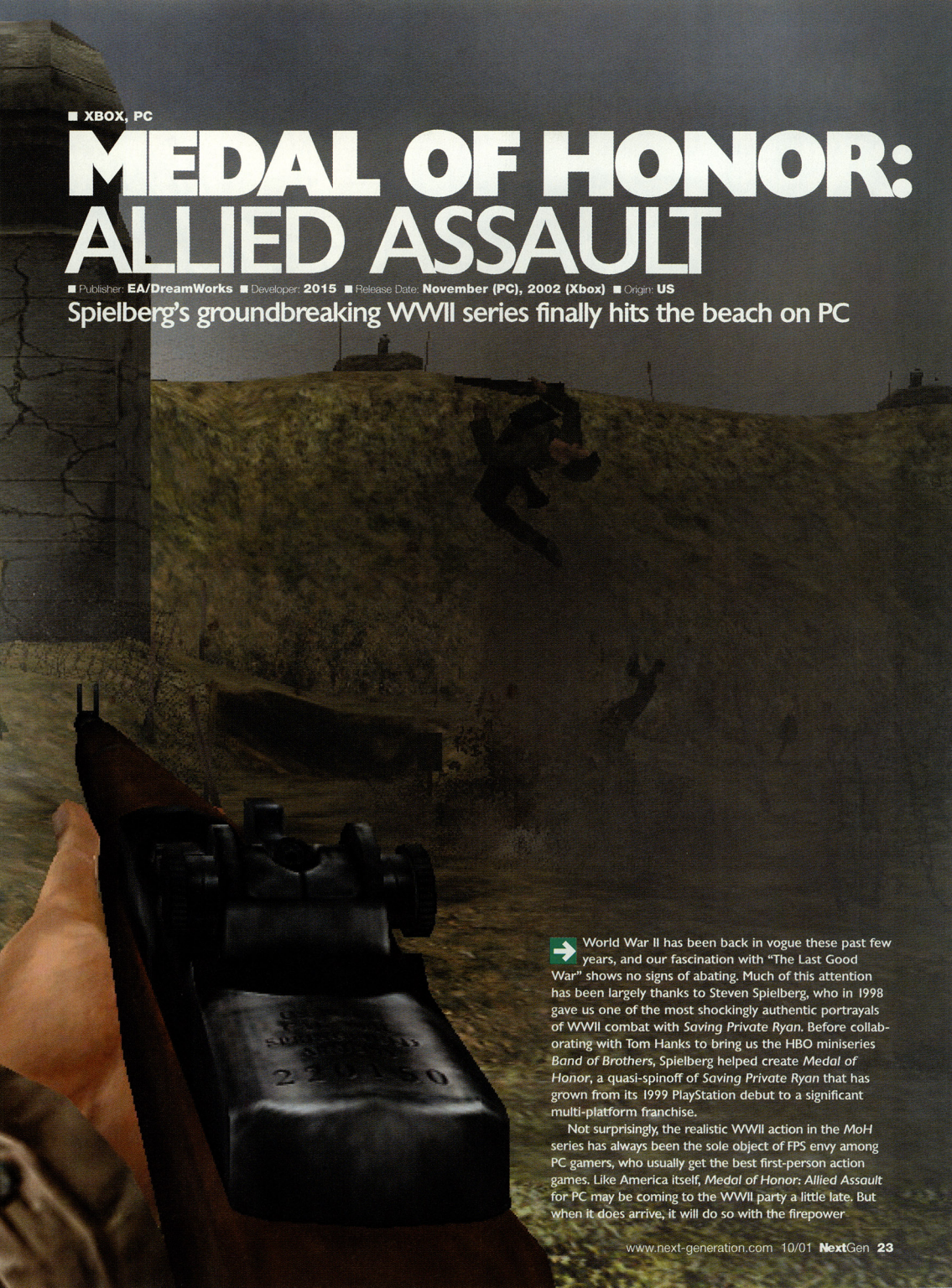


■ XBOX, PC

MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT

■ Publisher: EA/DreamWorks ■ Developer: 2015 ■ Release Date: November (PC), 2002 (Xbox) ■ Origin: US

Spielberg's groundbreaking WWII series finally hits the beach on PC



➔ World War II has been back in vogue these past few years, and our fascination with "The Last Good War" shows no signs of abating. Much of this attention has been largely thanks to Steven Spielberg, who in 1998 gave us one of the most shockingly authentic portrayals of WWII combat with *Saving Private Ryan*. Before collaborating with Tom Hanks to bring us the HBO miniseries *Band of Brothers*, Spielberg helped create *Medal of Honor*, a quasi-spinoff of *Saving Private Ryan* that has grown from its 1999 PlayStation debut to a significant multi-platform franchise.

Not surprisingly, the realistic WWII action in the *MoH* series has always been the sole object of FPS envy among PC gamers, who usually get the best first-person action games. Like America itself, *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault* for PC may be coming to the WWII party a little late. But when it does arrive, it will do so with the firepower



■ Players will have access to a wide variety of Axis and Allied weaponry ranging from the MP-44 assault rifle to the Stielhandgranate "potato masher" grenade

required to shake the genre's bunkers to their foundations.

Players assume the role of U.S. Army Ranger Lt. Mike Powell for more than 25 levels that almost shame the original PlayStation games. Powered by



■ Many of the locales in *Allied Assault* appear to be directly taken from *Saving Private Ryan*

the *Quake III* engine, *MoH:AA* draws on elements of real WWII history as well as *Saving Private Ryan*'s most heart-pounding moments, with the aim of giving players a more immersive, realistic experience. "One of the guiding principles of the *MoH* series has been that real life is always more interesting than anything you can make up," affirms DreamWorks Interactive Producer Peter Hirschmann. "The team at 2015 spent hours in the classroom in the field with Captain Dale Dye, the military advisor for both *Saving Private Ryan* and the *MoH* series, studying the various Allied and Axis field tactics and formations that are so vital to the game's design."

This gritty realism is never more evident than in the level that wowed

"You can tell a compelling story without resorting to blood and dismemberment."

— Peter Hirschmann, producer, DreamWorks Interactive

so many onlookers at E3 — a stomach-churningly authentic and atmospheric recreation of the Omaha Beach D-Day landings of June 6, 1944. As we played our way through a preview version, we were blown away by the uncompromising realism as the game's scripted sequences threw wave after wave of American soldiers up the beach and into the Nazi meat-grinder. Men with their guts blown out scream to go home; terrified privates cower behind tank defenses; officers shout orders to advance. The experience is every bit as immersive as in *Private Ryan* — perhaps even more so

FROM SHORE TO SHINGLE



■ Welcome to the Omaha Beach landing party. You start this level off as a member of a squad riding the rough waters on a Higgins Boat



■ It isn't too long before you approach the beach and the shells start flying in. One shell happens to hit your neighboring boat and sends the soldiers flying



■ Eventually, the door of the boat drops and you race out on to the beach through a hail of gunfire. These men look to you to lead them to the front



■ On your frenetic run through the trenches, slow only just enough to take out the Nazis in your path

because you really feel like you're there. In a later level, you're required to take out advancing Nazis from your clocktower sniper nest before they can advance on a strategically crucial bridge. And it's no coincidence that it looks almost exactly like Remelle, the setting for *Private Ryan*'s climactic battle scene. Credit, in part, Spielberg

himself, for taking an active interest in the game's development. "We were able to videotape about a half hour of his feedback for the development team on just the D-Day level alone," says Hirschmann. "He's the creator of the series, so he's been involved with all the titles going back to the original *Medal of Honor*."



■ There are more scripted events in *Allied Assault* than in any game we've seen. Yes, even more than in *Half-Life*



■ Your sniper rifle will play a key role in many of the missions. You'll also have to constantly look out for Nazi snipers



"There's nothing like a full-scale battle that you can jump into the middle of."

— Peter Hirschmann

One area where movie and game do part ways is in the graphic depiction of blood and gore. While *Saving Private Ryan* showed horrific scenes of graphic carnage, *MoH:AA* seems to be shooting more for a Teen rating.

"*Saving Private Ryan* was made for older viewers, while the motivation for Steven (Spielberg) in creating the *MoH* series was to bring the WWII experience to a wider audience by keeping the material accessible," explains Hirschmann. "You can tell quite a compelling story without resorting to blood and dismemberment." That said, weapons and damage are all being modeled to a level of realism consistent with the rest of the game — don't expect to hear any Nazis yell "Mein Leiben!" as



■ Along the way, soldiers drop like flies in the heavy enemy fire and mortars that rain down from the sky. It's a nerve-wracking experience — nowhere is safe



■ The ridge is in sight, but it'll still be a long, arduous trip to the front. To your left a soldier tries to call in and relay just how messed-up this situation is



■ Eventually you make it to the barbed wire, but nobody can get through. It turns out that you'll have to go back and get the Bangalore. Good luck!



■ After you get up the beach, over the wire, and through the trenches you'll need to take out the Nazi gunners so the rest of your forces can get through

you drill their bodies full of lead.

The part of *Allied Assault* that excites us the most — apart from the compelling backdrop — is the fact that you really feel like you're just a piece (albeit a sometimes critical one) in the overall war effort. While parts of the game will consist of traditional commando-style solo missions, you'll also be spending a lot of time fighting as a part of Allied squads made up of computer-controlled soldiers. "There's

nothing quite like a full-scale battle between Allied and German forces that you get to jump into the middle of," says Hirschmann. We couldn't agree more. Our early play-through showed off some remarkably smart AI and clever scripted scenes involving your Allied comrades, and you'll come to rely on them (and ultimately care about them) as the game wears on. On one snow-bound level that had us infiltrating a Nazi compound, our NPC

"Real life is always more interesting than anything you can make up."

— Peter Hirschmann

buddy risked his ass to silently take out a couple of sentries and open a gate for us, only to be mown down by two more Nazis who passed by on patrol. Needless to say we emptied a full clip from our Thompson SMG into their twitching corpses.

While there's still a lot of optimization and cleaning-up to be done, *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault* looks to be on target for a November release. When that happens, history will take on a revisionist twist, as an army of excited gamers willingly dare the gunfire of Omaha beach.

— Gary Whitta



■ From your perch on the top of this partially destroyed building you can take out Nazis as they try to blow up the bridge (top). When things start to get out of hand and they call in their tanks, you'll need to start calling in air strikes to take them out (right)

■ PLAYSTATION 2

RUBU TRIBE

■ Publisher: **Interplay** ■ Developer: **Outrage** ■ Release Date: **Q1 2002** ■ Origin: **US**

■ The Rubu (front) and the Uut form a symbiotic relationship of sorts. As the leader of the Rubu, you need to make sure the Uut is well cared-for

Big things can come in the smallest packages

It's admittedly tough to get a handle on Chicago-based developer Outrage's new title. Part 3D third-person platformer, part resource management game, and part puzzler, *Rubu Tribe* doesn't fit neatly into any genre. Of course, that's the point.

The game revolves around the Rubu colony's quest to reach a holy temple and recharge the tribe's life-giving "Muku ball," which keeps the two-foot-tall Rubu alive. Since they're so tiny, however, they "enlist" the help of a gigantic creature, the Uut.

Being clever little folk, the Rubu build a small village on top of the traveling Uut, then patrol the path ahead for dangers.

As Muku, the leader of the Rubu, your tasks range from gathering resources and taking out enemies of both the Uut and the Rubu to solving a host of other problems. "The puzzles are a bit different from what gamers are accustomed to," explains Lead Designer Nate Goudie, adding that "since *Rubu Tribe* takes place in a natural environment, the resources are more organic in nature. Learning

about the creatures, plants, weather, and other things is pivotal."

Your most important assets are your fellow tribe mates. Using your "order horn," you can command your troops to interact with the environment in many different ways, and very simply: Just select the horn, target an item, then decide which class of Rubu (scholar, worker, or warrior) you want to use to interact with the item. "If you target a knuckle tree," explains Lead Artist Josh Foreman, "your scholar will tell you it can be cut down. Your warriors will defend the area around it, and your workers will cut it down. Every interaction is context-sensitive in this way."

Getting it all to work properly will be a balancing act of epic proportions, but like the Rubu themselves, we're sure the team will persevere until the job gets done.

— Blake Fischer

■ You can order your fellow Rubu travellers to complete complex tasks



■ Many strange lands await you



TALENTED RUBU

Muku and his tribe are gifted with more abilities than in your traditional third-person run-and-jump. If the Rubu need to use an animal to help in a certain situation, you can actually hop on the creature's back and try to tame it. Even your main weapon, the Squid stick, changes function depending on what animals you snare with its ropy tendrils. Grab a small spiky creature, and you can use the stick as a mace, or grab one that shoots quills and you have an impromptu dart gun.



■ The first world boss is big and extremely deadly, but, in true 16-bit style, if you figure out his secret weakness you can take him out

■ **PLAYSTATION**

MAXIMO

■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom Digital** ■ Release Date: **Q1 2002** ■ Origin: **US**

**Ghosts, ghouls, and goblins beware!
A Capcom classic is reborn**

→ One of Capcom's more enduring franchises through the '80s and into the '90s was *Ghosts 'n Goblins*. And now David Siller, director of R&D for Capcom

Digital Studios, Capcom's U.S.-based development arm, is bringing it back. "There was a need and a hunger for that product from everyone," he explains.

"Capcom of Japan wouldn't do anything about it, so we stepped up to the plate and said, 'Let us reinvent it, with new characters and a lot of new features, new gameplay.' We wanted to keep it innovative and fresh, but it's all fast action."

Indeed, from the sound of the backstory and level structure, the design document could have been written in 1989. Maximo, a young king from medieval Rome, returns from a foreign war to find his kingdom in shambles. An evil councilor named Achille has usurped power

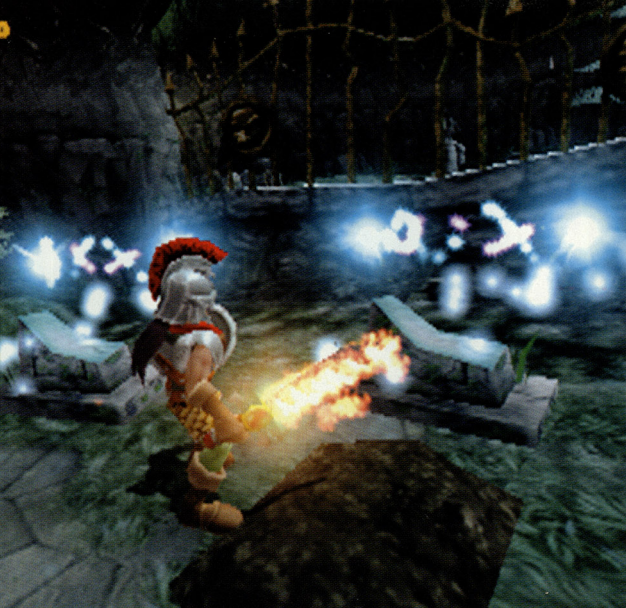
TO CONQUER JAPAN

Although *Maximo's* gameplay and level design are being handled in the U.S., Capcom turned to Famiyu illustrator Susumu Matsushita for the character designs. "[The Japanese gaming public] loves his work," says Capcom Digital's David Siller. "The indications we've gotten from the Japanese press is that they're absolutely in love with *Maximo*. We think this will be the second American-developed franchise to go over to Japan and be successful, the first being *Crash Bandicoot* — and having been involved with both of them, I'm very happy about that."



■ *Maximo* strikes a very fine balance between sword swinging and 3D platforming





and forced Maximo's betrothed, Sophia, to marry him. Worse, Achilles is aided by Magnus, an evil magician, who has called up the undead to serve as his army. Maximo confronts Achilles, who promptly kills the young king. Fortunately, Death himself is a little miffed at having all those undead souls stolen from the underworld. So if Maximo can stop Achilles and Magnus and return the dead to their rightful place, Death will allow Maximo to live.

Gameplay is a mix of third-person action and platform challenges. Maximo is initially armed with a sword, shield, and armor, while power-ups can be found along the way to make the sword more deadly, as well as slowly turn the shield from a defensive item into an autonomous Frisbee of death. Also, special abilities — again, granted through found icons — can be locked into the character, including everything from lengthening the sword to calling down lightning and fire. You can use as many

power icons as you can find — all in all there are 40 — but you can only hold on to three if you die. However, Achilles has also imprisoned four beautiful sorceresses in four towers across the kingdom. By freeing each one, Maximo can add one more save slot for an additional power.

According to Siller, the game will follow a linear path (albeit a wide one, with room for exploration) through five environments. "We have the Graveyard world," he says, "where Maximo first enters the kingdom. Then there's the Ship's Graveyard, which is an ice world, followed by the Swamp. There's the Underworld — Maximo makes a brief descent into Hell. Then in the final level, after he's rescued the four sorceresses he storms the castle."

And while the game is steeped in classic gameplay elements, be prepared for 21st-century technology. Siller describes the gameplay as offering a "very dynamic playfield. The ground falls under you and rises above. We have big



■ You'll have to collect as many souls as you can during your journey so you can buy continues from Death himself when you die



spinning gears and moving platforms. So you're not just traversing the environment but also fighting enemies. Stuff is popping up from underground. There are secret chests and secret areas to discover, like a movie that's so enthralling that when it's over you wish it were longer. We want to keep the player so busy with so much to do, yet having so much fun, they'll want more."

This should come as no surprise; Siller came to Capcom two years ago from Universal, where he was the producer for the original *Crash Bandicoot* — itself an attempt to bring mascot-centered platform games into the 32-bit era. Already, the playable levels of *Maximo* perfectly reflect this marriage between modern technology and old-school play mechanics. When the game is finished, it won't be revered for doing anything new, but it will be commended for doing what Siller's team originally planned it to do, and doing it to perfection.

— Jeff Lundrigan



■ You must learn to use your shield successfully if you want to survive

■ XBOX, GAMECUBE, PLAYSTATION 2, PC

GOOD COP, BAD COP

■ Publisher: TBA ■ Developer: Revolution ■ Release Date: Q3 2002 (UK), TBA (US) ■ Origin: UK

Revolution revisits the themes of *Black and White* — only with guns, badges, and mob warfare

■ This game is about choices: Should you open fire and mow these gangsters down, or try to stealthily subdue and arrest them?

→ It happens in nearly every action movie — that climactic moment when the hero has defeated the villain at gunpoint and must choose between trusting the justice system (cough... sissy!... cough) or simply wreaking bloody personal vengeance right then and there. With Revolution's upcoming third-person action adventure *Good Cop, Bad Cop*, you can be certain the trigger gets pulled — that is, if you have the balls to pull it. But be warned: There will be serious repercussions for every

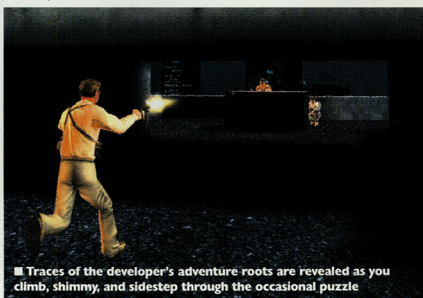
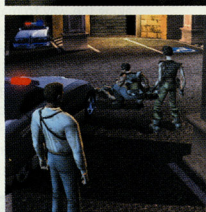
action, and your choices will drastically alter the plot and feel of the game.

In fact, *Good Cop, Bad Cop*'s story provides plenty of opportunity for marginal judgment. You play Ben Kellman, a streetwise detective who has been framed for murder by a mob-hired gang of kidnappers. As if this weren't reason enough to seek revenge, the leader of the gang was responsible for your father's death. With the aid of your goody-two-shoes partner Maria (basically the little angel on your shoulder) and

your boss McNab (playing the part of the guy with the horns and pitchfork), you must set things right — using whatever methods you see fit. Subsequently, this "moral dilemma" gameplay dynamic will permeate the entire game.

Creating a full-on action game is a departure for Revolution, a company famous for excellent old-school adventures like *Broken Sword* but infamous for *In Cold Blood*, an ill-fated crossbreed of adventure and action gaming. Still, what we've seen is very encouraging, with intuitive analog controls and enemies aware of what kind of person you are. We're eager to learn what kind of cops we'd make. — Eric Bratcher

■ Some enemies carry riot shields and must be attacked from behind, but here, we're just being nasty



■ Traces of the developer's adventure roots are revealed as you climb, shimmy, and sidestep through the occasional puzzle



■ We think the ability to spray walls while skating will be a considerable improvement on the original's gameplay. At least it should be easier to avoid the cops

■ XBOX

JET SET RADIO FUTURE

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Smilebit** ■ Release Date: **Winter** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Smilebit wants you to paint the town red. And blue. And purple...

➔ Despite critical acclaim and a then-unique cel-shaded visual style (which has now been "borrowed" by almost every major publisher in the industry), the original *Jet Set Radio* (in the U.S.) didn't actually sell very many copies. Still, the development

team believes that there is a place in the crowded console market for its unique hip-hop vision of rollerblade-based graffiti artists who must take on street gangs, the cops, and eventually the army in hyper-stylized Tokyo suburbs. On a new console with better graphics and a slew of gameplay enhancements, Smilebit's faith is going to be tested when its game shows up among the already crowded Xbox lineup this year.

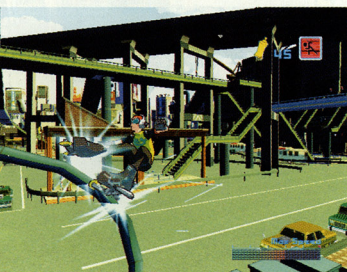
The update to the groundbreaking rollerblading/spraypainting formula will be anything but a lazy sequel. Key to making the Xbox version unique will be the addition of new game modes — a feature designed to give the sequel greater replayability. Significantly, there will be a Versus option enabling two players to go head-to-head in a splitscreen format. Key parts of the city will be open for dueling contests, which will range from graffiti

spraying to trick performances. In all, the team hints at 10 modes for the final game.

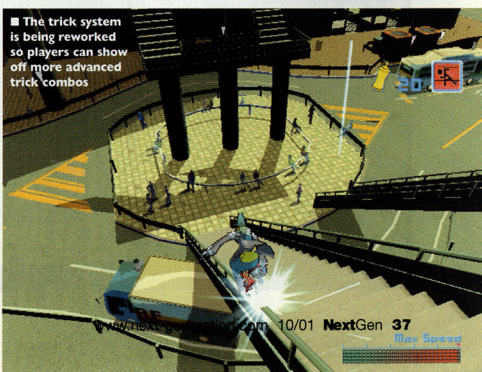
And while *Jet Set Radio* offered a range of stylish tricks, its combo system lacked the sophistication of similar freestyle titles such as *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*. Smilebit wants to remedy this by improving the transitions between tricks and building in a more dynamic combo system. "From the smallest detail to the main features, everything has evolved," explains Director Masayoshi Kikuchi. "We



■ This trick system is being reworked so players can show off more advanced trick combos



■ The level geometry is extremely complex





■ The cities in JSRF are far more detailed than in the first game. Check out just how many civilians appear in this shot



are rebalancing lots of things — tricks, style, animations, and game controls. We want to give the game more extreme sensations, not only speed. We really want to upgrade the feeling of skating in these urban environments."

In terms of structure, the developer is avoiding the rigid objective-based

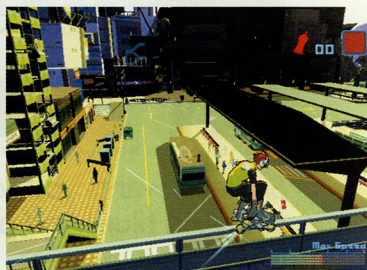
missions associated with the first title. For the Xbox version, the player will be encouraged to explore every alleyway and rooftop. This freedom will be generated through character interactions. Time limits won't be imposed until an event is triggered — for example, meeting the challenge of another character or a rival gang member. Then the action really

begins. Kikuchi paints a typical Jet Set Radio Future scenario: "For example, at the start of the game you meet a rival character who challenges you to a duel in Shibuya. The police intervene, and you flee. The rival character challenges you and says he will wait for you in a location called Koganecho. This allows you access to this new stage and enlarges your play area."

Kikuchi also promises that chases between the player and the police will be more exciting — a factor enhanced by the player's ability to spray while on the run. There will be a greater emphasis on interactive detail as well. One improvement already apparent is that the cars no longer blindly mow the players over; in the most recent version shown to **Next Generation**, the cars actually react to the player's presence.

Can JSRF convince a heretofore unwilling audience of its genius? We're not sure, but it looks like it could be one of the gems in this year's Xbox lineup.

Unfortunately, the game's eventual success may once again hinge on the ever-fickle market for new consumer hardware during one of the most intense console wars ever. Amidst all the hype and hoopla, though, people should recognize the true worth of Smilebit's efforts — or else the only cel shading we'll see in the next year will be yet more Looney Tunes games...
— Nigel Edge



■ Players will be free to explore the cities in the game at their leisure as they are only going to be timed when they find new missions or challenges to complete

MORE POWER! MORE POWER!

Xbox's 64MB memory capacity is something that's enabled the team to fully explore its ideas for the title. Graphically, the game will retain all the verve of the original's cel-shading routines enhanced through Nvidia vertex shaders, but the look has been further refined. "On the design side, it has allowed us to generate better textures," says Art Director Ryuta Ueda. "Stages are now more complicated and expansive. They include four times the polygons from the Dreamcast version." The team is still adding in graphical enhancements as this is being written, but small touches like discarded newspapers fluttering in the breeze you create as you pass by are already in place and are delightful embellishments that make Xbox shine.



■ Dreamcast



■ Xbox





■ Each of the four hunters has a unique set of Edges (magic spells), but it's hard to beat a good shotgun



■ The camera is quite dynamic, often zooming right up into the action or pulling back to keep every hunter onscreen



■ XBOX

HUNTER: THE RECKONING

■ Publisher: **Interplay** ■ Developer: **High Voltage Software/Digital Mayhem** ■ Release Date: **Q1 2002** ■ Origin: **US**

Resident Evil meets *Gauntlet Legends* gameplay. Will it become a must-have Xbox title?

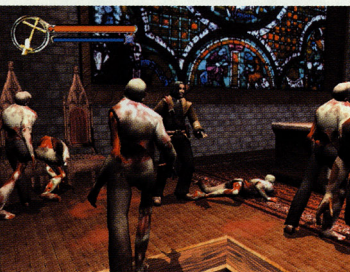
➔ Much like John Carpenter's B-movie classic *They Live*, in which Rowdy Roddy Piper discovers that monsters are hiding in plain sight all around us, Interplay's upcoming 3D multi-player-focused action-horror title *Hunter: The Reckoning* takes place in a world overflowing with creatures of the night. And in one small town, a former prison infested with vampires, zombies, and other grotesque abominations has just unleashed its denizens upon the world. That's where you and your friends come in. You're "hunters," previously ordinary humans gifted with the ability to see monsters for what they truly are — and you're committed to destroying them.

Gameplay is largely inspired by *Gauntlet Legends*, with up to four players dismembering hordes of enemies on a shared screen, but with a horror setting and increased RPG elements. Hunters gain "Conviction" by slaying enemies, which fuels their use of special abilities and "Edges," the game's magic spells. The control scheme is reminiscent of *Robotron*, in which one stick moves the character and the other stick aims. There are four hunters: Deuce, an offensive-minded biker; Father Cortez, a zealous magician; Kassandra, an ex-cop

who focuses on defense, and Samantha, a near-suicidal martial artist. Each has abilities designed to complement the others' talents, and the entire game is being crafted with multiplayer as the primary game mode, despite a puzzling, perhaps ominous decision not to include online features.

Even at this early stage, *Hunter: The Reckoning* has impressive visuals. If its tried and true game mechanic proves similarly well realized, we'll be tracking it down ourselves this spring.

— Eric Bratcher



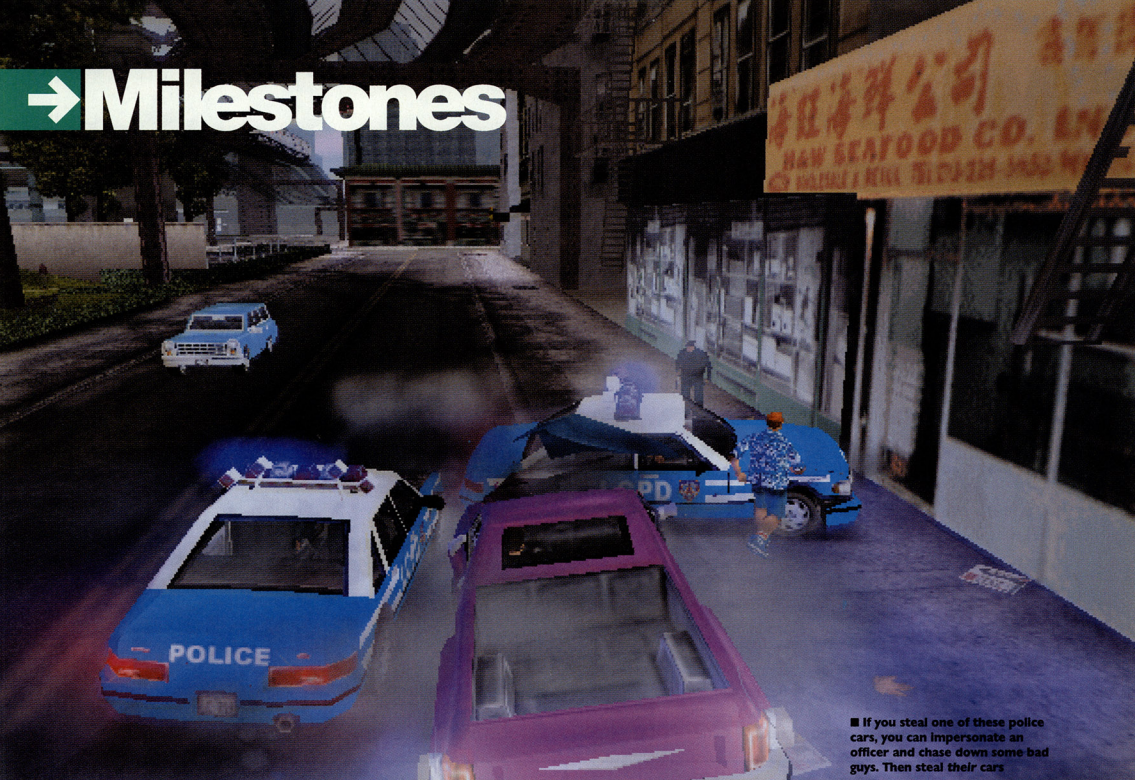
■ Some monsters defy description, the results of experimentation in "fleshcraft"

SAME LICENSE, DIFFERENT GAMES

Hunter: The Reckoning's setting may be more familiar than players initially realize. It's based upon a pen-and-paper RPG of the same name and is part of White Wolf's *World of Darkness* franchise, which, despite inspiring over 200 books and novels, boasts a dubious videogame history. Other promising games based in the WoD universe have included *Vampire: The Masquerade — Redemption*, which could have been great if it hadn't shipped unfinished, and ASC's own *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, which was put to sleep before it got that far. We hope *Hunter* has better survival skills.



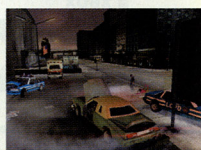
→ Milestones



■ If you steal one of these police cars, you can impersonate an officer and chase down some bad guys. Then steal their cars



■ Sure, it's called *Grand Theft Auto*, but there's plenty of trouble to get into on foot as well



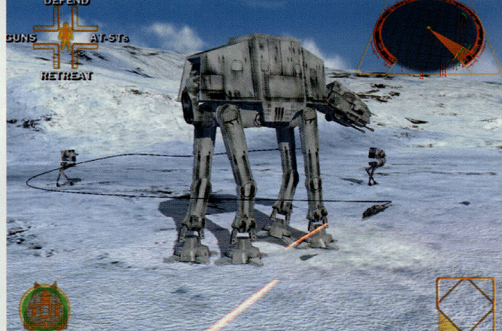
■ **PLAYSTATION 2**

GRAND THEFT AUTO 3

■ Publisher: **Rockstar** ■ Developer: **DMA** ■ Release Date: **October** ■ Origin: **UK**

→ We finally got our hands on a nearly complete playable build of this one, and it's just awesome. There's an incredible amount of open-ended gameplay here. You can follow the *Sopranos*-style story line, executing hits, stealing cars, and playing chauffeur to the mob. Or you can do countless other activities, like stealing a cab and becoming a cabbie, gunning down gangbangers, or pilfering a police cruiser and arresting suspects. The opportunities are endless — and intriguing.

→ Milestones



■ The newly revealed Hoth battle finds the player lassooing AT-ATs (above), with assistance from ground forces (left)

■ **GAMECUBE**

STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER: ROGUE SQUADRON II

■ Publisher: **LucasArts** ■ Developer: **Factor 5** ■ Release Date: **November** ■ Origin: **US**

→ We almost wish LucasArts would stop showing us its upcoming GameCube dogfighter — it just makes the wait more difficult. Still, we thought you should see these new shots, which depict the Rebellion's efforts to repel the Empire's AT-AT-led assault on Hoth. Add this to another look at the levels we saw back in **NG 06/01**: attacking a Star Destroyer, blasting TIEs from the skies over Bespin, and piloting a classic X-Wing in an assault on the Death Star, and you've got our most eagerly anticipated GameCube game.

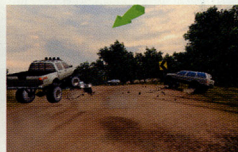


■ Is there any cooler feeling in the universe than blowing up the Empire, one little piece at a time?

■ **XBOX**

4X4 EVO2

■ Publisher: **Take 2** ■ Developer: **Terminal Reality**
■ Release Date: **November (launch)** ■ Origin: **US**



■ Each vehicle boasts over 5000 polygons, and even the suspension and antenna are modeled with accurate physics



→ Normally, when we see "Autosave" listed on a game's feature list, we take that to mean there's not much else to brag about. However, Terminal Reality's *Smuggler's Run* meets *Gran Turismo* looks to have plenty to offer gamers. There are over 30 courses, ranging from desert to jungle, and the racing is complemented by Explorer mode, which sends the player on missions such as locating a downed plane, or searching for a lost Mayan City. For vehicle tweekers, there are over 70 licensed 4x4s, and some 90 upgradeable parts.

■ **PLAYSTATION 2**

SHAUN PALMER'S PRO SNOWBOARDER

■ Publisher: **Activision** ■ Developer: **UEP**
■ Release Date: **October** ■ Origin: **US**

→ We've actually found ourselves letting our preview copy of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 sit on the shelf a bit lately, as we play this game instead. Why? While it isn't remotely as pretty or as polished as Hawk 3, it has a masterful two-player, head-to-head mode called Push, in which each player starts with half of the screen, but can gain or lose screen space based upon his performance. Eventually, the loser simply runs out of screen. A similar mode actually appeared in the U.S. version of *Fantavision*, but it's better realized here. It's brilliant.



■ There are 10 riders, and several modes of play, but two-player "Push" is definitely this game's secret weapon

■ **PLAYSTATION 2**

SMUGGLER'S RUN 2: HOSTILE TERRITORY

■ Publisher: **Rockstar** ■ Developer: **Angel Studios**

■ Release Date: **October** ■ Origin: **US**

➔ This sequel to one of PlayStation 2's best launch titles looks great and offers more explosive action. We especially like the new Bomb Tag mode, in which the vehicles play hot potato with a ticking time bomb. The AI is even more ruthless than in the first game, draw distance is greater, and the ground is completely covered with terrain features like grass and scrub. We're a little concerned that all this detail may keep the game from hitting a consistent 60fps, but if anyone can pull it off, it's Angel.



■ The new multiplayer Bomb Tag mode is just one of the reasons *Smuggler's Run 2* looks great. We hope the framerate can keep up

■ **PC**

ZOO TYCOON

■ Publisher: **Microsoft** ■ Developer: **Blue Fang Games**

■ Release Date: **October** ■ Origin: **US**

➔ This zoo-sim shamelessly apes *RollerCoaster Tycoon*, but any game whose first scenario begins with the sentence, "Your first task is to build an exhibit capable of holding a Bengal Tiger" sounds good to us. Plus, you can conduct important research, like seeing what happens when that tiger gets loose, or when penguins are housed with saltwater crocodiles.



■ In one of the game's pre-made scenarios, the player must rehabilitate this dilapidated, under-funded site (top right) into a decent zoo (above)

New technology sometimes breeds new champions. Just as EA's 16-bit *Madden* series stole the football title from the 8-bit *Tecmo Bowl*, the *DOA* series is ready to take the fighting genre crown. Forget about *Virtua Fighter 4*. Forget about *Tekken 4*. Blasphemy? Not if you've played...



Dead or Alive 3

This is the must-have fighting game of the next year — and it's only on Xbox



When Tecmo's original *Dead or Alive* was released back in 1996, it was little more than a *Virtua Fighter 2* clone with explosive boundaries, additional countermoves, and female fighters with breasts that aggressively over-obeyed the laws of physics. The graphically stunning sequel, 1999's *Dead or Alive 2*, weighed in as a solid contender, further developing the series' trade-

mark elements: a dynamic fighting engine, huge arenas, and a disproportionate number of blatantly sexy combatants. While the series has evolved nicely, it was not until the team stepped up to the power of the Xbox hardware that *Dead or Alive* has become something more than a second-tier fighter. *Dead or Alive 3*, months from completion, may have what it takes to do what *Metal Gear*

■ Though it may be the prettiest game ever made, the fighting in *DOA3* can get downright ugly



→ Cover Story



■ The arenas in *DOA3* are vast, with depth of field unparalleled by any game we've ever seen

Solid 2 and *Gran Turismo 3* will do for PlayStation 2 and what *Mario* and *Zelda* have done for Nintendo — that is, to provide a gameplay experience so rich and rewarding that gamers will buy the system just to play it.

ONE STEP UP, TEN STEPS BACK

Fighting game sequels often make the mistake of changing either too little or too much. *Tekken Tag Tournament* did the former, being basically a prettier *Tekken 3* with tag battle added. *Virtua Fighter 3*, with its wildly varying terrain, its decreased leaping, and its emphasis on executing moves swiftly instead of strategically, exemplifies the latter. *Dead or Alive 3*, however, seems to be evolving perfectly, incorporating new concepts while simultaneously continuing to refine the combat system. Tomonobu Itagaki, head of Tecmo's Team Ninja



■ You'll notice these screens showcase only the female fighters — because the demo we saw featured only females. The male characters will be added later, but we wonder if they'll look as good

and creator of the series, credits this surefootedness to the team's habit of completely deconstructing the game with each new generation.

"Mostly, we start from scratch," he reveals. "We look through every spec in the game, and if there's anything

we feel that we can use we will pick it out and use that part. But even then it will still be upgraded and refined."

THE LAND OF AWES

After first handing us a controller, Itagaki wastes little time in pointing out these refinements. Many are in the game's finely tuned fighting engine, as when he demonstrates one of the new moves — a reversal that not only puts his *Kasumi* behind our *Ayane*, but leads to a spine-snapping new special attack.

As our lesson in technique proceeds, we are also impressed by the battlefields themselves. Each area drips with lush textures, lavish lighting, and innumerable extra cosmetic touches that reinforce the sense that the game exists in a living, breathing world. Itagaki gracefully slams us into one of the countless trees in a forested area, then points out the leaves that flutter down as a result of the concussion. We then switch to a snowy cavern lit by startlingly realistic torches. Here Itagaki slams us into one of this stage's many icy stalagmites, which shatter into fully textured 3D shards. Another stage, a candlelit dojo,





■ Hitomi (in the gi) is a new face. She studies karate, and from what we can see, she does it rather well

worthy of hype. After all, how different are DOA3's trees from the statues in Tekken 4, or DOA3's leaves from the deformable sand in Virtua Fighter 4? The answer? Not very — but there's so much more of it here. The Xbox hardware has enabled Team Ninja to infuse every element of the game with this same unprecedented level of depth, subtlety, and realistic beauty. And nowhere is this more evident than in the fighters themselves.

Take another look at the image on our cover — that's Tina's actual in-game model. And if you think she looks good now — well, you're right, but you should see her in motion. Her every movement is fluid and lifelike, thanks to painstaking motion capture and the fact that the team actually studies the martial arts techniques each fighter uses — occasionally sporting the bruises to prove it. On top of that, her hair and costume sway

comes complete with a paper wall that can be torn through, and, in another, a nearly photorealistic beach scene features dozens of gulls swirling through the sky, as Itagaki once again slams us in the shallows of the dynamically rendered water.

TOMONUBU'S OF HOLLYWOOD

Realistic arenas, however, are not enough to make the game truly



Itagaki gracefully slams us into one of the countless trees in a forest level, then points out the leaves that flutter down as a result of the concussion.

and wave realistically as she moves, thanks to sophisticated cloth and hair models. Incredibly, we find ourselves listening to Itagaki nonetheless apologizing for the model's incomplete

DEAD OR ALIVE

The first *Dead or Alive* jiggled into Japanese arcades in 1996 and was largely derivative of *Virtua Fighter 2*, having been built on Sega's Model 2 arcade board and, some say, even licensing the same game engine. There were two major differences: moves enabling players to block and counter enemy attacks, and the fact that the female characters' breasts bounced so much it was freakish.



■ Arcade



■ Playstation

DEAD OR ALIVE 2

DOA2 arrived in Japan just as U.S. Dreamcast owners were declaring *Soul Calibur* the best game ever. The bosom bouncing decreased, but everything else was exponentially enhanced. The improvements continued with every home version, from the U.S. Dreamcast version to the ones for PS2 and Dreamcast in Japan, and finally for the U.S. PS2 launch, renamed *Dead or Alive 2: Hardcore*.



■ Dreamcast



■ Playstation 2 (DOA2: Hardcore)



■ The white-haired vixen below is Christie, a British assassin trained in She Quan — that's Snake Fist Kung Fu

→ Cover Story

■ Subtle effects are everywhere, from the sunlight peeking through the trees to the lifelike ripples and wrinkles in the fighters' costumes

appearance — in the final build, even the individual muscle groups will animate, so Tina's leg will change shape slightly as she throws a kick, and her arm will flex as she punches. And yes, the ladies, including newcomers Hitomi (a brunette who favors a traditional gi) and Christie (the white-haired lass often seen in a low-cut bodysuit) are more beautiful than ever. While at least one new male

character has been added as well — Brad Wong, apparently the game's drunken master — Itagaki freely admits his fondness for the female form. "I am aware that some people talk negatively about the sex appeal," he concedes, adding with a smile, "but nobody's perfect."

BEAUTY AND THE XBOX

Simply put, this is an incredible,

elegant game that couldn't be conceived on any other home system. Certainly not on PlayStation 2, whose limitations will already force sacrifices to be made in the home versions of *Tekken 4* and *Virtua Fighter 4*. Nor, from what we've seen, even on GameCube, which (rumor has it) will be graced with *Soul Calibur 2*. Complementing Xbox is Itagaki himself, an exceptional designer with a talented team and a strong vision:

"*Dead or Alive 2* was the best overall in the fighting game genre," he asserts. "In all specs, like graphics,

In the final game, even the individual muscle groups will animate, so Tina's leg will change shape slightly as she throws a kick, and her arm will flex as she punches

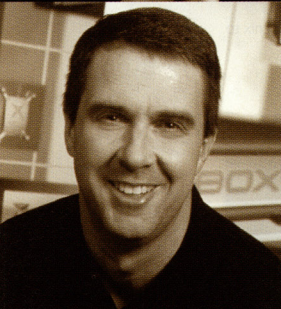
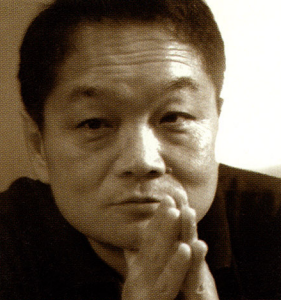
like fighting features, in characters, in graphics, in sounds, and in fun, it was the top. We will do the same with *Dead or Alive 3*." A bold statement, to be sure. But we've played it, been blown away by it, and honestly can't find any reason not to believe him. Fence sitters, take note: Xbox has its first undeniable, unquestionable killer app.

— Eric Bratcher/Blake Fischer



■ As stunning as this ice cavern already looks, there's more yet to be done. Eventually, the girls' reflections (not just their shadows) will be visible in the ice





The game industry is a multibillion-dollar ship carrying millions of passengers and thousands of crew. Ever wonder who's at the controls?

25 POWER PLAYERS

Next Gen picks the 25 most powerful and influential people in the game business



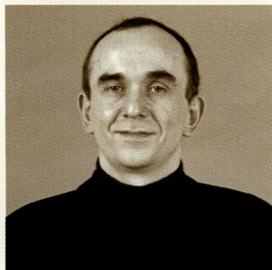
In 1995, **Next Gen** caused quite a stir when we picked the 75 most important people in the game industry. Six years later, we're doing it again by naming the luminaries who basically run the industry — the select few who can change the fortunes of gamers everywhere.

This is not a nostalgic look at gaming's past, nor is it a look at tomorrow's stars. It is today's global snapshot of the ever-evolving game business. In compiling this list, we followed three criteria: 1) a person's past achievements are considered only if they're still shaping the industry; 2) creative talent is as important as business savvy; and 3) more credit was given to those pushing gaming in new directions, at the expense of those who continue to make significant contributions in established fields.

The process took hours to complete and provoked heated debates as we all argued our opinions. Development teams were painfully boiled down to one representative individual, and many gaming legends were slowly cut from the list as we took a "What have you done for me lately?" stance. Of course, we realize that creating (let alone ranking) a list of the 25 most powerful and influential people in the industry will invariably stir up a maelstrom of bitter objections and indignant complaints. But **Next Gen** is willing to brave the slings and arrows of disagreement to recognize the risk-takers and leaders who make the industry what it is today.

■ These are the top movers and shakers of the videogame industry. To find out how they stack up, just turn the page...

25 PETER MOLYNEUX LIONHEAD STUDIOS, MANAGING DIR.



What's the big deal? Molyneux has cranked out blockbuster games, including *Populous*, *Theme Park*, and, more recently, *Black and White*. Some thought Molyneux was losing his magic, but *Black and White* gave players a level of control and power never before seen in a videogame. Through his Lionhead satellite studios, the first of which is Big Blue Box, Molyneux is incubating the next generation of game designers who share his vision of raising the bar for the industry. Molyneux commands respect from the top designers, and his influence is ever-expanding.

What's next? With Molyneux's help, big Blue Box's *Project — Ego* should redefine the RPG genre.

24 YUJI NAKA SONIC TEAM, PRESIDENT

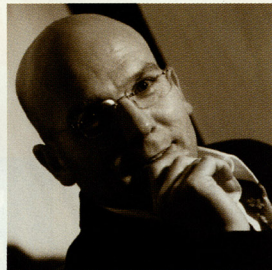


What's the big deal? Imagine Sega without Naka's *Sonic the Hedgehog*, both as a Genesis-selling game and de facto mascot (Mr. Nutz, anyone?). Naka has consistently made critically acclaimed games, ranging from *Phantasy Star* on Master System to *Samba de Amigo* on Dreamcast. He has more potential than anyone outside Miyamoto for developing a character-based hit for GameCube, and Naka (along with Yu Suzuki, see sidebar at right) will be key to the success of Sega as a third-party publisher.

What's next? Naka prides himself on

not using graphics as a crutch, so don't be surprised if he spends less time on consoles and more time on GBA and cell phone games.

23 BRUNO BONNELL INFOGRADES, CHAIRMAN/CEO



What's the big deal? Forget the armadillo logo; a shopping cart may be more appropriate for Infogrames, the company Bonnell co-founded in 1983. Few videogame industry execs are as aggressive on the open market as Bonnell, as evidenced by his acquisitions of Accolade (1999), GT Interactive (1999), and Hasbro Interactive (2000). He was even in talks to buy Eidos, though a deal

was never struck. While critical hits are few and far between, Infogrames is a top-10 publisher in the U.S. and dominates the European market with products ranging from *Unreal Tournament* and *Deer Hunter* to *Blue's Clues*.

What's next? Don't be surprised if Bonnell makes a move on Koel or Enix to gain a foothold in Japan.

22 GABE NEWELL VALVE SOFTWARE, FOUNDER/MANAGING DIRECTOR



What's the big deal? *Half-Life* was such a great game and won so many awards that many people are actually forgetting how good it was. With one title

THE INNOVATOR 21 YU SUZUKI

AM2, DIRECTOR

What's the big deal? Suzuki is Sega's big gun, the man responsible for everything from *Space Harrier* to *Virtua Fighter* to *Shenmue*. Sega needs to make a big splash on PlayStation 2, the platform on which third-party publishers will make money next year, and it speaks volumes that Sega entrusted Suzuki with getting the job done. In many ways, he holds the future of Sega in his hands.

What's next? The story is not complete — expect the *Shenmue* series to continue on PlayStation 2, but on a grander scale.



■ Suzuki's *Virtua Racing* was a critical hit, ranking Number 11 on Next Gen's list of the top 100 games of all time (NG21, 09/96)



and an add-on, Newell has created a brand that has sold about 1,829,000 copies in the U.S. (including expansion packs), according to NPD Intellect. Hard to believe that this newly crowned gaming leader was working on system software at Microsoft for 13 years.

What's next? Rumors are swirling that *Half-Life 2* is headed to Xbox first.

20 KELLY FLOCK

SONY ONLINE, PRESIDENT AND CEO



What's the big deal? Few industry execs have been around longer than Flock, who started in the game business building boxes at EA's packaging plant. After stops at Activision and LucasArts, Flock was appointed president of Sony Imagesoft in 1995. Since taking the Sony Online helm in 2000, *EverQuest* subscriptions increased about 60%, to 406,000 subscribers, and Flock's just getting started. He's launched initiatives to take *EverQuest* international, with a translation feature and payment systems designed for European and Asian markets, and he's gearing up to expand his company's experience in online gaming to the console market.

What's next? Just because SOE is a Sony division doesn't mean Flock is in Kutaragi's back pocket. He plans to make his games available to anyone with an Internet connection, including Xbox and GameCube gamers.

19 ALLEN ADHAM

BLIZZARD, CHAIRMAN AND CO-FOUNDER



What's the big deal? Blizzard is on one of the biggest rolls that the PC industry has ever seen. Its *WarCraft* and

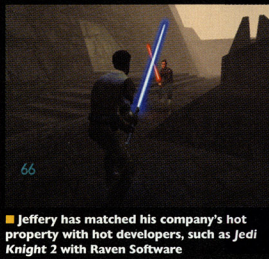
THE JEDI

18 SIMON JEFFERY

LUCASARTS, PRESIDENT

What's the big deal? The *Episode I* film and its subsequent games tarnished the Lucas reputation, underwhelming gamers and connecting the franchise with mediocre games. But Jeffery put a stop to that and polished up the *Star Wars* brand by offering the license to top developers in their respective genres, such as matching Bioware with the RPG *Knights of the Old Republic*, Sony Online with the MMORPG *Star Wars Galaxies*, and Raven Software with FPS *Jedi Knight 2*. Since Jeffery became president in 2000, LucasArts has been on a noticeable upswing. The ultimate license in the videogame industry has never been more valuable, and that's due to Jeffery's business decisions and push to deliver better product.

What's next? LucasArts already knows what can happen if it coasts on its name alone, so look forward to *Star Wars: Episode II* games that don't suck.



Jeffery has matched his company's hot property with hot developers, such as *Jedi Knight 2* with Raven Software



Diablo series, along with *StarCraft*, have sold millions of copies worldwide. Unlike a company such as Electronic Arts, which built its fortunes on business deals, Blizzard earned its reputation based on incredible games and incredible teamwork, and of all the Power Players in this issue, Blizzard's driving force was the most difficult to select. But Adham oversees everything from art to story and has been executive producer on just about all of Blizzard's games. As his company grew in success, so did Adham's business responsibilities. He ultimately relinquished his role as president in 1998 to remain focused on the games themselves.

What's next? Rumors are swirling that Blizzard is next to tackle the console market again, and it could be one of Xbox's keys to success — if Sony or Nintendo doesn't lock it down first.

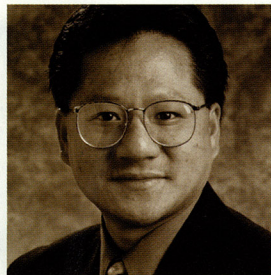
17 JEN-HSUN HUANG

NVIDIA, PRESIDENT AND CEO

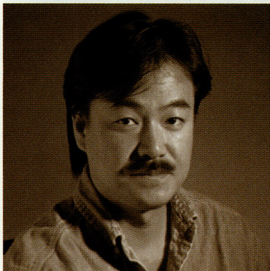
What's the big deal? 3dfx who? When Nvidia bought its former rival, it solidified its position as the 800-pound gorilla of

the graphics industry. Although it's always dangerous when one company has so much control, Huang may have saved the PC game industry by providing a standard for which developers can design their games. But it's not just the PC industry that Nvidia influences; its Xbox graphics chip has set a new standard in performance, and will drive the look of console games to even greater heights.

What's next? The nForce motherboard, with integrated graphics and audio, will make more PCs compatible with today's games without inconvenient upgrades.



16 HIRONOBU SAKAGUCHI SQUARESOFT, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER



What's the big deal? Perhaps you've heard of *Final Fantasy*? Make no mistake: Square is a significant player in the industry because of Sakaguchi and his gift for storytelling, which is why he made this list instead of Square President Hisashi Suzuki. Sakaguchi has evolved the *Final Fantasy* brand into one of the strongest in the game industry, tallying more than 33 million units sold. He's already announced that *Final Fantasy XI* will be online-only, and only Sakaguchi has the cachet to singlehandedly get the PlayStation 2 online network off the ground. And Sony knows it.

What's next? Hopefully not a sequel to the \$100-million vanity project known as *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*.

15 MASAYA NAKAMURA NAMCO, CHAIRMAN AND CEO



What's the big deal? Hard to believe Nakamura and the company that would become Namco started out installing rocking-horse rides in 1955. While the company has increased its overall business since then, including expansion into theme parks and restaurants, its home console market has shrunk to 23% of Namco's overall income. Still, franchises such as *Tekken*, *Ridge Racer*, and *Ace Combat* have a loyal following, and many insiders think Dreamcast wouldn't have lasted as long as it did without the support of Namco's system-selling *Soul*

THE PRODUCER

13 SHINJI MIKAMI CAPCOM, PRODUCER

What's the big deal? *Resident Evil*, *Dino Crisis*, *Devil May Cry*... Mikami has established himself as the Stephen King of videogames with edgy titles that take the gamer on a journey into terror. It would be difficult to find another developer with a hotter streak of million-selling games. At E3, Mikami said the goal of *Devil May Cry* is for the game to be "cool," which could describe his other hits as well. Capcom is flourishing as a game company on the creativity of Mikami, and he has already garnered a reputation strong enough to take on whatever projects that interest him.

What's next? Mikami is putting the finishing touches on *Devil May Cry*, *Resident Evil* for GameCube, and *Dino Crisis 3* for Xbox.



■ The *Resident Evil* franchise continues to put gamers in Mikami's nightmare worlds



Calibur. *Soul Calibur 2* is rumored to be exclusive to GameCube, which could lead the way in solidifying Nintendo's third-party lineup.

What's next? Nakamura expanded Namco's non-gaming business during the console transition period, but he'll return his focus to videogames as the new systems launch — much to the benefit of gamers worldwide.

14 HIDEO KOJIMA KONAMI, DIRECTOR



What's the big deal? There is no game more highly anticipated than Kojima's *Metal Gear Solid 2*. Period. The United States and Europe accounted for the sale of more than 5 million *Metal Gear Solid* copies, oddly making his game more popular outside Japan (attributed to Japan's small action game market). His gift for taking the suspense and storytelling elements from film and bringing them to gaming has made Kojima one of the hottest talents in the business.

What's next? *MGS2* has been a drain for Kojima, so expect a break from the series and a focus on original titles.

12 ROBERT KOTICK ACTIVISION, CHAIRMAN, CEO, DIRECTOR (see picture on opposite page)

What's the big deal? Activision is one of the few public companies that does more than keep its head above water, and it's steadily grown since Kotick took over in 1991. Under Kotick's direction, Activision bought *Tony Hawk* developer Neversoft in 1999 for about \$12 million in stock. To understand the significance of

this move, understand that the *Tony Hawk* franchise has sold almost 8 million units worldwide. That deal goes down as one of the biggest heists since the Brink's job. Another strong move was acquiring Raven Software in 1997, which has become the hot FPS company after *Soldier of Fortune*, *Star Trek Voyager Elite Force*, and the highly anticipated *Jedi Knight 2*. Much of the company's success results from the acquisition of mainstream-friendly licenses, such as Disney's *A Bug's Life* and *Spider-Man*, backed with branded titles such as *Quake III* and *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*.

What's next? Expect Kotick to try to become the EA of extreme sports games, leveraging the brand names of Tony Hawk, Mat Hoffman, Shaun Palmer, and Kelly Slater.



11 KAGEMASA KOZUKI KONAMI, PRESIDENT



What's the big deal? The company that brought you *Frogger*, *Castlevania*, and *Metal Gear Solid* now brings you... health clubs? As crazy as this may seem, Konami founder Kozuki bought a chain of health spas last August, embracing the concept of diversification in the face of its Yu-gi-oh card game (think *Pokémon*, but darker) bringing in more money than its videogames. But with *MGS2* and *Silent Hill 2* on the horizon, Kozuki's company should remain one of the most respected gaming companies in the industry.

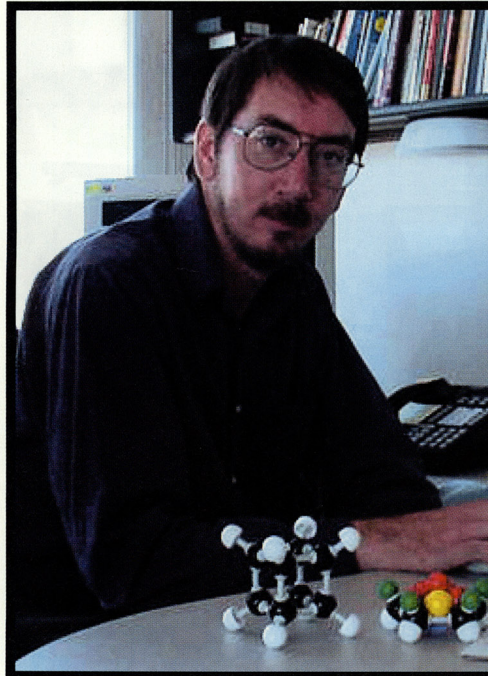
What's next? The *Metal Gear Casino*? Well, not quite, but Kozuki recently began shipping Konami slot machines to Mississippi casinos. Bet on him to push Konami's idea of entertainment further outside the videogame market.

10 ROBERT CONNOLLY WAL-MART, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF MERCHANDISE



What's the big deal? This is the guy who gets wine and dined by game publishers and console manufacturers. Wal-Mart is the largest videogame retailer in the country, and Connolly is the person in charge of what games are sold in the more than 4,000 Wal-Mart stores and clubs worldwide. Do not underestimate the amount of power he wields. A game can get killed by not being sold in his stores, and so can a system. Only Toys 'R' Us even comes close to being in Wal-Mart's league for videogame sales.

What's next? There's no lateral move that's more attractive than his current position. There are a few seats above him on the pyramid, and the throne may be his if he can wait for it.

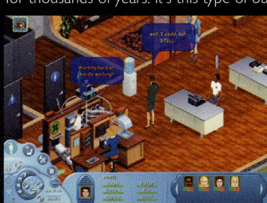


THE PUPPETMASTER

9 WILL WRIGHT MAXIS, LEAD DESIGNER

What's the big deal? As if *SimCity* didn't turn the business upside down, *The Sims* became the most successful gaming phenomenon since *Pokémon*. The man is simply brilliant, redefining entertainment and finding the magic mix of gameplay that appeals to both the hardcore and casual gamer. Wright creates a sandbox in which gamers play, and not only provides them with all the toys they need to have fun but limits his rules so they have maximum freedom. This formula results in games that morph to each individual's gaming capacity, whether a hardcore gamer or novice. Need further proof of Wright's stature? Miyamoto invited him over to chat about design when Wright was in Japan.

Wright has broken out of gaming's bubble and become the closest thing to a pop-culture celebrity that the industry has. Thankfully his ego doesn't match his talent, or else this modest and unassuming guy would be unbearable. Wright's academic approach to design looks beyond traditional gaming inspiration, understanding that design has been around for thousands of years. It's this type of out-of-the-box thinking that ultimately pushes gaming away from recycling tired ideas.



■ **No guns? No explosions?** Will Wright has proven that designers don't need to offer violence in their games, just creativity

What's next? The online bug has bitten Wright, with his first project along this path being *The Sims Online* (left) for PC. The Internet has opened up a whole new world for Wright, and he'll find a way to work within it in his unique way — and sell well over a million copies along the way.

8 KENZO TSUJIMOTO CAPCOM CO. LTD., PRESIDENT



What's the big deal? Once upon a time, critics thought Capcom was a three-trick pony with endless sequels of *Street Fighter*, *Mega Man*, and *Resident Evil*. Then came the million units sold of *Power Stone*. And the 2 million units sold of *Onimusha*. And now there's the forthcoming *Devil May Cry* and *Maximo*, which have "hit" written all over them. Tsujimoto has built up his company on par with Japanese rivals Namco and Konami, parlaying new franchises into millions of units sold and continuing to make headway into the American and European markets.

What's next? Tsujimoto will continue to give Capcom's loyal fans the sequels they want. But he'll expect producers such as Mikami to deliver fresh content and help Capcom increase the momentum the company has built up over the last 22 years.

7 HIDEKI SATO SEGA CORP., PRESIDENT



What's the big deal? When Sato was appointed head of Sega Corp., he took the reigns of one of the oldest and respected game companies around. The heads of all nine of Sega's internal development studios ultimately report to Sato. As Dreamcast becomes a thing of the past, he can now maximize Sega's strength as a software developer. But for all the power that Sato wields as the top

Sega exec, he also assumes a great responsibility: Many in the industry expect Sega to challenge EA in the next couple of years as the top third-party publisher in the world, and anything less will be unacceptable.

What's next? Sato was an early proponent of network-centric games when he was still COO of the company. Now that he's in charge, expect networked Sega games running on PS2, Xbox, GameCube, and in the arcade.

5 JOHN CARMACK ID SOFTWARE, FOUNDER AND LEAD PROGRAMMER



What's the big deal? In 1999, Carmack was ranked Number 10 on the *Time* Digital list of most influential people in technology, ahead of Sun Microsystems boss Scott McNealy and cable mogul Paul Allen. Apple CEO Steve Jobs called Carmack for help on how to make the Mac a legit gaming platform. Microsoft

Chairman Bill Gates consulted Carmack on the development of Xbox. No programmer pushes the boundaries of graphics like Carmack, and when he speaks, people listen.

What's next? Carmack has such a passion for 3D programming that there is no "next" — only "better." Look for Carmack to further evolve 3D gaming with his new *Doom* game.

THE ROOKIE 6 ROBBIE BACH

MICROSOFT, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT/CHIEF XBOX OFFICER

What's the big deal? He reports directly to Bill, and he directs the entire Xbox project: hardware, third-party game development, first-party game development, operations, marketing, research, sales, and support. Bach will make the final decisions on every major Xbox initiative, and the success of Microsoft's console will hinge on the moves and deals he makes (or doesn't make). He has assembled a strong team to help him get Xbox off the ground, including first-party VP Ed Fries and Xbox Technology Officer Seamus Blackley. As Xbox launches and establishes a solid chunk of market share, his power can only increase.

What's next? Bach has a lot to accomplish, but he's already accomplished a lot. If Xbox can be the global success that Gates believes it can, Bach could soon find himself on the top of **Next Gen's** top Power Player list.





What's the big deal? He commands the largest third-party game publisher in the world, a role he's served for the last 10 years. Huge hits have kept the company successful, such as the *Madden* franchise, *The Sims*, and *SSX*. Probst makes smart moves, such as growing EA's distribution division into the most extensive in the U.S., which drew valuable customers like Square and LucasArts. Since Probst became CEO in 1991, EA has increased its net income from \$9 million to \$117 million. But the company is not infallible, as the messy EA.com site has proven. Long gone are the days of (former president and current head of 3DO) Trip Hawkins, and in its place is Probst's steady leadership which has made EA a player on a global scale.

What's next? There's not much left for this 51-year-old CEO — except retire and cash in the millions of dollars worth of EA stock he reportedly has.

THE WIZARD

3 SHIGERU MIYAMOTO

NINTENDO, DIRECTOR

What's the big deal? He is the undisputed king of game development, and the designer to which all others look for inspiration. Picking the best Miyamoto game is like picking the prettiest girl at the Miss America pageant: You can't really go wrong. *Donkey Kong*, *Super Mario Bros.*, *The Legend of Zelda* — Miyamoto changed the way publishers look at games, proving non-violent titles viable in a time when spaceships and explosions ruled. If Miyamoto ever moved to another game company, Nintendo would take a huge hit to its solid reputation. Yet despite his vast influence and power in the industry, Miyamoto still answers to the man who gave him his start in the business, and that fact keeps him at Number 3.

What's next? Three things are inevitable: death, taxes, and incredible Miyamoto games. *Mario* and *Zelda* will appear on GameCube — and a healthy market share for Nintendo will follow.



■ Whether *Super Mario Bros.* or *Luigi's Mansion*, Miyamoto's games are the most eagerly anticipated titles in the industry



THE EMPEROR

2 HIROSHI YAMAUCHI

NINTENDO CORP., LTD., PRESIDENT

What's the big deal? He is the patriarch of the oldest gaming company and still wields great power. Yamauchi's been playing at the high-stakes table since Sony's Ken Kutaragi was in diapers, and his company laid the foundation upon which this industry now stands. Think Nintendo took a pounding as it lost market share to Sony? Consider this: Nintendo had net sales of over \$5 billion in fiscal 2000.

It all started in 1949, when Yamauchi took the helm of Nintendo when it was a hanafuda card-game manufacturer. In 1984, he took a huge chance in launching NES during a time when the videogame industry was a train wreck — and he struck gold. He instituted a security system in this flagship console that gave Nintendo complete control over what could be played on it, which gave Yamauchi leverage in forcing the industry to pay a royalty just for the privilege of making games for the system.

In the '90s, Yamauchi shrugged off a lack of support from third-party publishers and used first-party games to maintain Nintendo's revenue stream. He has also grown Nintendo's external developer base through investments in companies such as Silicon Knights, Rareware, and Brownie Brown.

Yamauchi has a reputation for demanding superior quality over quantity, a reputation supported by the many system-selling titles that have come out for every Nintendo platform. A legion of Nintendo fans guarantees a successful GameCube launch. But the simple fact that Sony pried the mantle of market dominance from his wizened fingers shows a dent in his once-impenetrable armor.

What's next? The 74-year-old elder statesman of the game industry seeks vengeance with GameCube and once again postpones retirement.

THE MAVERICK 1 KEN KUTARAGI

SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT INC., PRESIDENT & CEO

What's the big deal? Considered the father of PlayStation and PS2, Ken Kutaragi is, at this juncture, the most powerful and influential man in the videogame industry. He is equally important to the Sony empire, where it's been rumored that he is a contender for the top slot when current Sony Corp. CEO and Chairman Nobuyuki Idei retires.

Kutaragi is the game industry's Renaissance man. He brings with him

KEN KUTARAGI: PLAYING WITH POWER

What's on the mind of the most influential man in videogames?
Next Generation goes to Sony Computer Entertainment's Global Headquarters in Tokyo to find out



As **Next Generation** rounds the corner and looks up the sloping city thoroughfare in the Akasaka section of Tokyo, we are struck by a familiar, yet massive brushed metal logo adorning a blue windowed tower. The name says it all: Sony Computer Entertainment. The worldwide headquarters for all things PlayStation dwarfs its surrounding buildings, a tribute to the success of Ken Kutaragi's system. Ironically, it stands only 300 meters from the building where Kutaragi designed the original PlayStation in 1993. By coincidence, our interview falls on the day before Kutaragi's 50th birthday. When asked how he was going to celebrate it, he said, "In the office, working" — not surprising, when you consider the amount of responsibility he's earned in his 26 years as a Sony employee. (He started in 1975 as a researcher working on flat-screen display technology.)

We catch Kutaragi smack in the middle of the day, when he joins us directly from another meeting. He's gracious, smiling, and you can tell his brain is comfortable going 100 miles a minute. Considering there are other things he needs to do, we skip the weather and get right down to business.

NEXT GENERATION: This October, PS2 celebrates its first anniversary in the United States. How do you feel the machine is doing?

KEN KUTARAGI: This week, I am very, very happy with the progress of PS2, because in this country [Japan], it is starting to explode. *Final Fantasy X* sell-through is great. Many others — *GT3*, *Everyone's Golf 3* [*Hot Shots Golf* in the U.S.], many titles — are stimulating huge, huge demand. So both software and hardware are selling very, very well.

NG: But until very recently, it hasn't been doing well in Japan.

KK: In the initial stages, everyone welcomed PlayStation 2. But unfortunately we could not deliver on 100% of the expectations. But right now, developers have been able to do so much more with another year of development time.

the skills and background of a brilliant engineer, along with a new business savvy that surpasses the old-school ways of our number-two power player, Nintendo's Yamauchi. Yet Kutaragi probably has the most in common with Shigeru Miyamoto. Both share the same passion for creating and the same boyish sense of wonder.

Sony has shipped 85.4 million units of Kutaragi's first-born console to consumers the world over. Now the company is looking to maintain market dominance with PS2 and is

We are very confident with the start we have made in generating content.

NG: How accurately has PS2 come to reflecting your vision of computer entertainment?

KK: Even when you compare PS1 to the old 8-bit or 16-bit days — *Super Mario*, *Zelda*, *Pac-Man* — it's totally different. PlayStation 2 is bringing even more enhanced experiences above PlayStation 1. The graphics expression, the sound expression are more akin to what we are used to hearing or watching on TV. Huge scenarios like *Final Fantasy X* are now playable on these DVD-ROMs. *Final Fantasy X* or *GT3* types of entertainment were not possible in Nintendo's 16-bit days, or even on CD-I.

NG: You mention two of the best titles for PS2, but a lot of the

aggressively constructing its forthcoming online network. In doing so, Kutaragi has forged new partnerships with AOL and other technology giants in hopes of building a global entertainment network. You won't hear him call them online videogames; Kutaragi aspires to his own vision for "computer entertainment," something he believes will be more than games, although what that is has yet to be defined.

Ask any PS2 developer, struggling with the system or not, and they'll tell you Kutaragi's as

other titles by other developers haven't come close to that level of quality.

KK: Did you play *Ka?* [*"Mosquito,"* see **NG 07/01**.] It's not what you would consider a traditional A-class title, but it is selling very well, and the budget on it would be considered very low.

NG: Well, small, quirky titles can work in Japan, but in order to be successful in the U.S., developers have needed to invest huge amounts of money. Companies like Konami and Square —

KK: Square is a very special case. Look at what EA has done with sports. They attract many customers in the United States, and the [current lineup of] racing games and adventure games are attracting many European customers.

NG: Yes, but some developers are still struggling with the machine.

KK: Case-by-case [laughs]. Right now, even many Japan-based developers are just starting to release better-coded PS2 titles. We're still just starting up.

NG: During the growth period of the original PlayStation, you made a performance analyzer available to help developers. Will a similar tool be available for PS2?

KK: Yes. It's in our laboratory right now, and we are planning to release this new analyzer for PS2 within a year. It's very complicated and not cheap; we'll rent these services or the analyzer itself.

forward-looking as they come. Regardless of the criticisms PS2 has endured in industry circles, the fact remains, the system will see some spectacular software this fall. So it seems only right that Kutaragi — with just the right mix of scientist, businessman, and personality — is the entertainment architect who leads us boldly, and enjoyably, into the future.

What's next? An online network for PS2, and a secret project codenamed "The Cell." See the interview (starting above) for more details.

→ Feature

NG: Sony has recalculated its earnings for the year and has cut capital investment by 25%. Has that or Japan's current economy affected your plans for PS2?

KK: No. We are one of the "dream crusaders" inside Sony [laughs] — the upside businesses expected to create positive cash flow this fiscal year: music, movies, games, and finance. But everything else is now struggling. It's a problem for the electronics and components sector, but entertainment will be OK.

THE COMPETITION

NG: How has the transition been in bringing in Sega, a former competitor, as a third-party publisher?

KK: I did not think of Sega as a competitor. Sega, Nintendo, Square, Enix — we are all collaborating with each other to create new entertainment.

NG: Even back when you were developing PlayStation and they were developing Saturn?

KK: Our engineers have always been in contact with Sega engineers exchanging possible ideas. While they were developing Saturn and Dreamcast, they were contacting our engineers [laughs]. It's a very close society. Sato-san, head of Sega — he was an engineer and I sometimes drink with him. We sometimes exchange ideas.

NG: Having outsold Nintendo 64 with PlayStation, you humbled Nintendo. Do believe the company poses more of a threat this time?

KK: I don't think so. It's very nice, but their approach is different. Their target is clearly entertainment, and it's very nice. In some areas we are clearly competitors, but at the same time, we are creating different kinds of products.

NG: Microsoft has created a console

"I think 3DO was a much, much nicer platform than Xbox."

— Ken Kutaragi

that's easy to develop for, built from off-the-shelf parts. They argue that if developers aren't spending as much time fighting with the system, they'll spend more time creating and balancing gameplay. Do you feel this is a legitimate view?

KK: Let me ask you this question. If this kind of benefit is one of the advantages of Xbox, why couldn't they demonstrate very nice, early titles at E3? And another question, if the system is easy to develop for, does that necessarily mean you'll get

very nice titles? Will you ask Mr. Spielberg or James Cameron if shooting pictures is easier using one kind of camera?

NG: Yes, but Xbox isn't even out yet. After all, it took even some of Sony's best developers a year to get PS2 product up and —

KK: [Interrupting] Yes, but more importantly, PS2 is a very, very deep system, and I'm confident that is the right environment for creating. The creativity is based on its differences. If it's easy to port to, it's easy to copy from. That is not creation, and it's not entertainment. I think 3DO was a much, much nicer platform than Xbox.

NG: [Shocked] 3DO?

KK: Yes! Because Trip Hawkins had vision — a clear vision, and a clear dream. Back in '95, at CES, in Chicago and Las Vegas, 3DO had a lot of titles.

NG: So you think Microsoft hasn't been very clear with its message as to what Xbox is?

KK: [Smiling] Nintendo continuously delivers nice messages and a nice selection of titles. They are very stable and a very, very confident company.

NG: Given the success of Game Boy Advance, will Sony ever challenge Nintendo with a handheld?

KK: We have no plans. But the Game Boy Advance is a very nice platform. It's cheap enough, nice enough. Two or three years from now, after mobile networks have matured everywhere, then maybe [we will think about it]. But right now, there's no incentive.

NG: Are you curious at all as to the connectivity which Nintendo is alluding to between Game Boy Advance and GameCu —

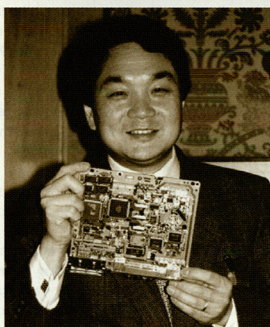
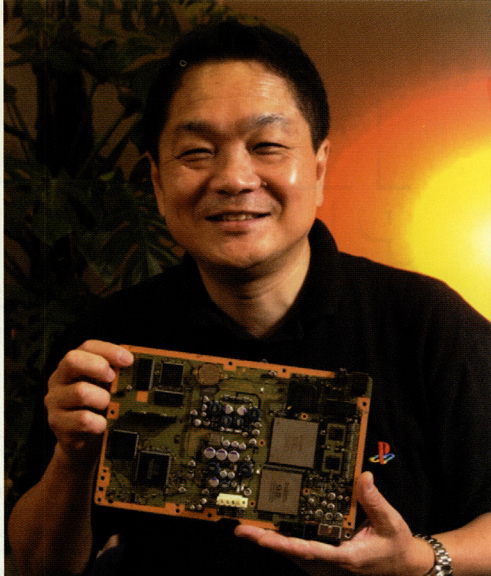
KK: The only true connectivity is with

everywhere! With a network, with every device, everything! That is connectivity [laughs]. Connecting a wire to a dedicated machine is not my idea of connectivity.

BEHIND THE PS2 NETWORK

NG: The external hard drive is now available in Japan, and soon a hard drive that fits in the expansion bay will be available in the U.S. If you were to do it again, would you build the hard drive into the machine?

KK: Right now, the hard disk drive with



■ Then and now: Kutaragi today, with a PS2 motherboard (above) and in 1995, holding a PlayStation board. The picture to the left was originally published in issue six of Next Gen, June 1995

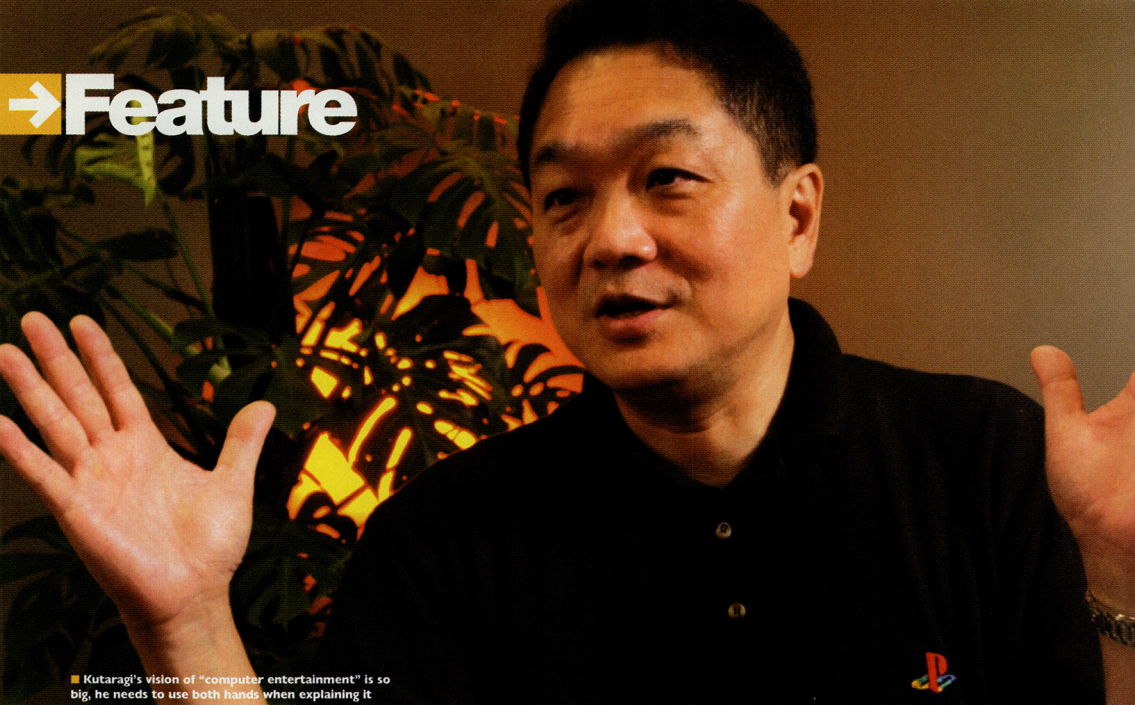
the Internet card is not the ultimate device for the future. The capacity of hard drives doubles every year, and bandwidth increases and increases. Suppose we incorporate a fixed environment into the box for five or six years when the system's life plateaus — it would become a negative asset for the system's future.

NG: So you believe even the current drive will be too small?

KK: We would really like to enhance such devices, or interfaces, with the network year by year, with a very, very attractive business model. PS1 and 2 as dedicated consoles are OK, because there are a lot of nice titles. But the network will be a totally different experience.

NG: Do you plan for this network to run globally? Is it possible to have the same network content running in Japan, Europe, and the U.S.?

KK: It's a global environment. The whole infrastructure itself is like the Internet, with all the servers connecting. However, many of the ISPs are currently fragmented,



■ Kutaragi's vision of "computer entertainment" is so big, he needs to use both hands when explaining it

in business models and in the technology itself. But fortunately, many of the DSL providers and ISPs are offering attractive environments in the United States as well as Japan, and Korea, everywhere.

NG: Why partner with AOL?

KK: Because AOL is huge, huge! Offering tons of services. They also have 30 million subscribers right now. It's a deal [laughs].

NG: So you're taking advantage of AOL's infrastructure?

KK: Yes.

NG: What about other partners such as Macromedia Flash? How do these partnerships make better games for PS2 users?

KK: Flash is clearly the number-one default standard for suppliers of networked content. But before I talk about the benefits for the game creators, it's very, very important to have the infrastructure and base. It's important that developers understand how to distribute premium content to the users. This global standard is very important for this kind of big, broad entertainment. We'll continue to ally with other partners who are delivering standards in many areas. Streaming device? Yes. TCP/IP? Yes. Under those environments we can offer some kind of inventive use of message services for games — some kind of streaming technology. We've got very, very broad standards on the horizon that we are

pursuing for the content publishers.

NG: That sounds like a narrowband network; some time ago you said the network would be broadband.

KK: Because America has a huge PC-based network environment, it's very difficult to convince American audiences and industries what the benefit of broadband will be. It's difficult to explain how it has a lot of potential. We are going to promote and build the pure broadband experience, and this infrastructure is part of that.

NG: So you will offer a pure broadband experience at some point?

KK: Pure broadband at some kind of starting point — 100Mbps (megabits per second) or above. Right now, 1MBps is still broadband in the U.S. Current Ethernet has 100Mbps peak bandwidth and cannot support TV-like video or game applications, and most PCs are still connecting with 56k modems, or so-called 1.5 MBps broadband, which is equal to the speed of a CD-ROM [laughs] — that's not broadband! Unfortunately, much of America is backed up by this kind of infrastructure. What I'm saying is, the U.S. is a serious country for narrowband.

NG: What can you tell us about Sony CTO Shinichi Okamoto. I understand he's working on a new project codenamed "The Cell"?

KK: It's still secret, but it's a very complicated and serious project.

NG: We understand it's a chip that will act as a network server?

KK: The Cell will be a core network processor for a connected network. These days, the server runs from client to client, but in the future the server and the client will be merged. The PlayStation and broadcast television channels will all be powered by the metal itself — no black box needed.

NG: Could it be wireless?

KK: It could be wireless, or on a fiber-optic wire.

"Most PCs are still connecting with 56k modems. The U.S. is a serious country for narrowband."

— Ken Kutaragi

NG: Or over cable?

KK: Broadband, not the current cable capabilities. This broadband network is connected to tons of connected "cells." It's for exchanging huge, huge data packets — broadcasting television channels or playing games, those type of communications. Everything will be done on The Cell.

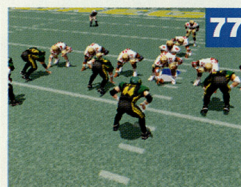
NG: This is being developed in Austin, TX?

KK: Austin for the processor. The operating system, the middleware, and packaging will all be done in different places.

NextGen

→ Finals

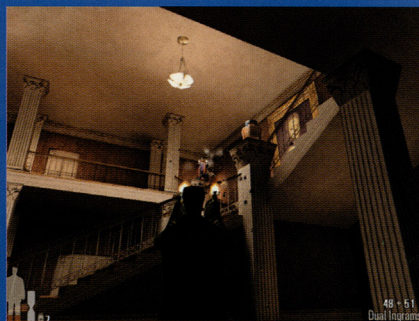
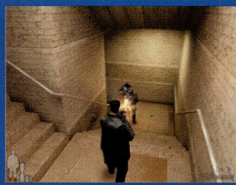
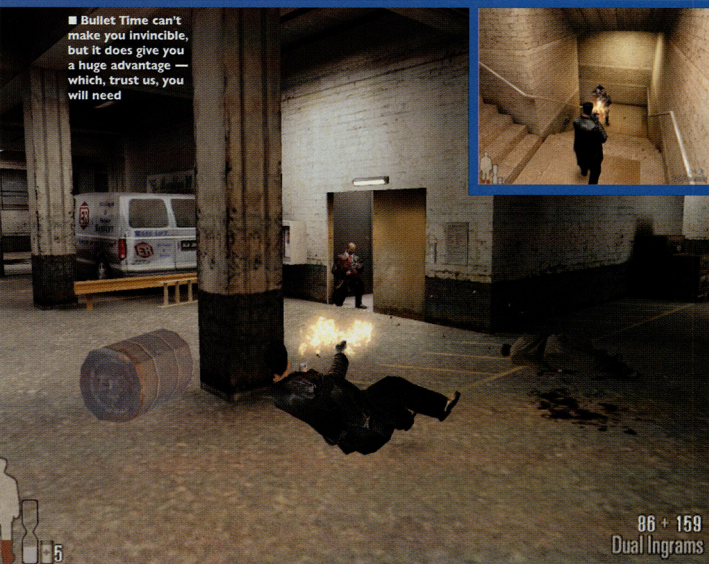
When a game you hoped would be great finally gets here, and it actually is great, it's a good day...



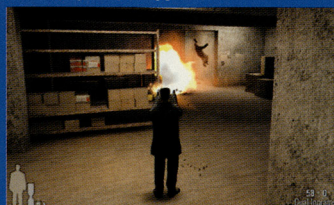
→ PlayStation 2

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■ Bullet Time can't make you invincible, but it does give you a huge advantage — which, trust us, you will need



■ The environments are incredibly responsive, from plaster flying to exploding gas canisters

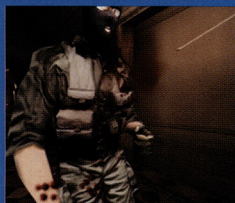


■ PC

Max Payne

■ Publisher: G.O.D./3D Realms ■ Developer: Remedy

And now, we beg for more Payne...



■ The action shifts to a slow-motion closeup of an enemy buying it

➔ In our E3 roundup (NG 07/01), we named Max Payne as one of the Best of Show, and we're happy to report that everything about the game that wowed us then still wows us now. That doesn't mean it's perfect, but in the final analysis, we can't think of the last game we played that was this cool.

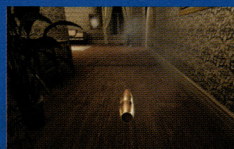
Max Payne is a New York City cop whose wife and child were

brutally murdered by junkies three years before. When he's framed for the killing of a fellow officer, it becomes clear the slaying of his family wasn't as random as it seemed, which sets him on a violent path of revenge.

Actually, the storyline is one of the game's weaker aspects, aping the clichés and hoary dialogue of action movies a little too closely for its own good. What's worse,

all the game's characters are "played" by members of the development team, with the result that Max, in particular, is far too pencil-necked to really carry off his burned-out tough-guy persona. The generally excellent voice acting helps overcome this, but never completely.

Once gameplay begins, though, things take off and never look back. The much ballyhooed



■ The Bullet Cam follows sniper fire



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The Rating System

Since we're living in a time when even average games are pretty good, we at **Next Generation** will continue to demand even better. Note that a three-star rating is a typical "good" game, so expect to see a lot of them.

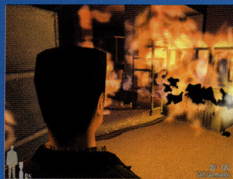
★★★★★ **REVOLUTIONARY**
★★★★☆ **EXCELLENT**
★★★☆☆ **GOOD**
★★☆☆☆ **FAIR**
★☆☆☆☆ **BAD**

● Denotes a review of a Japanese product



■ Yes, even *Max Payne* must have the mandatory sniper mode

"Bullet Time" meter, which temporarily shifts the game into slow motion and is filled by killing enemies, at first seems like little more than a gimmick. However, after playing for a while and learning how to manage your Bullet Time supply (use it sparingly and save it for really intense situations — of which there are plenty), it completely shifts classic shooter dynamics. Bullet Time won't make you invincible, but it does enable you to outmaneuver multiple enemies, aim carefully and concentrate your fire, and



■ Find your way out of an exploding building? Um, no problem...

quite literally dodge bullets.

This means you can often abandon the usual strategy of hanging back and picking off bad guys one at a time in favor of a much more active — and *waay* more cool — run-in-and-kill-'em-all plan of attack. There's nothing quite like charging into a room, ducking around a hall of gunfire, strafing a half-dozen thugs, hearing the "whoosh" as you slip out of Bullet Time, waiting a beat, and then watching as the bodies drop bonelessly to the floor. Add to this the occasional, scripted, slow-motion closeup of a specific enemy's demise, and you have a game that's as close to being an interactive action movie as it's possible to be.

Thankfully though, *Max Payne* doesn't rely so heavily on these tricks that it becomes repetitive and boring. The pace and mood are nicely varied, with combat broken up by action puzzles (like finding the right path through an exploding building), and a couple of truly creepy interactive dream sequences.

There are a few minor problems. As usual, the third-person perspective can make aiming a chore at times, especially in tight quarters. Boss charac-

PREORDER BLUES

Here's an odd footnote in gaming history. The day *Max Payne* was about to ship, the staff at 3D Realms was all ready to send off the thousands of preordered copies. Problem was, the company in Canada printing the game boxes mixed up the customs form, and as a result, FedEx held them up in a Memphis, TN warehouse. It took two days to get them released, then they had to be trucked by a private company to the 3D Realms offices. Still, a tip of the hat to the 3D Realms team, which dutifully stuffed boxes all night and all day, and had every last one of them shipped out less than 24 hours later.



ters often require ridiculous amounts of damage to kill, and in general things occasionally slip over the edge from being a stiff challenge to just being frustrating. Load times are too long, and worst of all, the game itself lasts only a spare 12 to 15 hours.

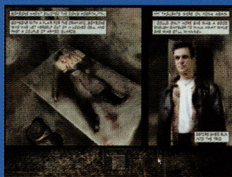
The graphics, however, are simply exceptional. Spent shell casings bounce off walls and floors; plaster sprays out of bullet holes; papers and objects fly in the air when struck by random

fire, and the textures that paint every surface are sometimes startlingly real. The sound and music are just as excellent and further immerse you in the game.

In the end, *Max Payne* is not perfect. On the other hand, we can think of few games, ever, that were such a blast to play, so neatly captured the essence of what they set out to simulate, or were just so over-the-top cool. Now, all we need is a sequel. — Jeff Lundrigan

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: Just buy it. It's worth every penny.



■ The game uses graphic novel-style cut scenes, which do add a certain mood

■ PLAYSTATION 2

ESPN X Games Skateboarding

■ Publisher: Konami ■ Developer: Konami

Skate bored

■ Frankly, there are much better skateboarding games out there

→ As 989 and Konami continue to battle it out for crappy sports game supremacy, occasionally a game comes along that could have been a contender — with the key phrase being “could have been.” *ESPN X Games Skateboarding* is a good-looking and valiant attempt to unseat Tony You-Know-Who, but the game simply has too many problems to ruffle the feathers of Mr. Hawk.

The first weakness is the game's surprising lack of depth. The button layout is very familiar, which is good, but pulling off tricks is almost automatic, which is bad. Get enough air, and stringing

together complicated tricks during a 720-degree rotation is a snap. To pull off a “super move,” simply fill up the oil “special meter” and then double-tap the triangle button. That's all you have to do for big, easy points.

It doesn't help that the game's graphics are crisp and clean, but rather incomplete. The San Francisco map is huge, but has poor draw-in, and the final Ruins level has slowdown so bad that it's simply unplayable in parts. The problem is made even worse by the fact that there are only six arcade stages, which is pretty puny. Plus, the X Games portion only adds two very small maps and is also stupidly easy — meaning all but the least competent gamers can finish both events on the very first try.

X Games Skateboarding isn't a horrid game. If it were the very first skateboarding title, we might actually be a little impressed. But the simple fact is that the genre has long since passed this game by. Skip it unless you just have to own every skateboarding game.

— Jim Preston

ENextGen ★★☆☆☆**Bottom Line:** It's plain vanilla without the sprinkles. Wait for *Hawk 3*.

City Crisis

■ Platform: PlayStation 2 ■ Publisher: Take 2 Interactive ■ Developer: Syscom Entertainment

A blatantly unrealistic yet undeniably amusing foray into the world of helicopter rescue units, *City Crisis* offers intense aerial thrills set on a timetable that'd make a *Crazy Taxi* fan break out in a cold sweat.

Though shallow as a shot glass, downing one mission after another will likewise leave you feeling giddy. Play modes include Rescue, Chase Encounters, and Time Attack. Rescues challenge you to stifle blazes within set time periods using a water cannon and fire-extinguishing missiles, rescuing burn victims as you go.

Lack of depth aside, frantic pacing makes this a winner, and you'll get a real adrenaline rush racing against the clock. The workmanlike dual analog control enables smooth sailing over a lovely 3D city. Colorful cartoon aesthetics easily complement the action, making play that much more enjoyable.

Balancing the fun gameplay against its limited replay value, you're probably better off with

ENextGen ★★☆☆☆**Bottom Line:** A flight sim lite for gamers possessed of big hearts and razor-sharp hand-eye coordination.■ It's not the greatest, but *City Crisis* has its charms

a rental. But even if what goes up must come down, at least for a short time it flies high.

— Scott Steinberg

Ephemeral Fantasia

■ Platform: PlayStation 2 ■ Publisher: Konami ■ Developer: KCEJ

This began as a Dreamcast title before shifting to PS2, but still has the distinction of being the “first traditional RPG” for the system. Honestly, that doesn't mean a hell of a lot. RPG fans will tell you that it's not the graphics but the storyline that counts; they obviously haven't played *Ephemeral Fantasia*.

You take control of Mouse, a thief and part-time musician with a talking guitar who's summoned to Pandule by the Island's ruler, the Sephiroth-alike Xelpherpolis. His wish is for Mouse to compose a song to play during his wedding to the cold but beautiful princess, Loreille. But all is not as it appears with the royal couple.

Unfortunately, you have to wade through choppy frames, a mediocre battle system, first-generation-Dreamcast-quality graphics, and a labyrinthine town layout in order to find any fun in the otherwise original and clever plot. There's even an interesting, pseudo-realtime clock that paces events and affects who can join your party, but it's nearly impossible to navigate in the massive town and keep your appointments. It's torturous to discover so many cool



■ Sure, it's got overly well-endowed, one-dimensional female characters and sexist talking guitars, but little else

features, such as Mouse's guitar-strumming abilities and the multiple endings, only to have the awful technical flaws keep you from ever enjoying them.

— Francesca Reyes

ENextGen ★☆☆☆☆**Bottom Line:** Don't be fooled by the cute characters on the box promising console RPG goodness. You'll find none of that here. Keep moving.

Rune: Viking Warlords

■ Platform: PlayStation 2 ■ Publisher: Rockstar ■ Developer: Human Head

Take a three-star PC game, lower the resolution, lengthen the load times, and this is what you get: a very ordinary port of an ordinary game. *Rune's* hack-n-slash simplicity has some charm, yet the game is ultimately bland as they come.

Human Head did a fine job of adapting a complex mouse and keyboard setup to the Dual Shock controller. But PS2's lack of texture memory is nowhere more evident than in this game's drab, repeating surfaces. Worse, there's a horrendous load time around

every corner, draining out what momentum you can build.

If you can stand the load, you'll be treated to ordinary combat that consists solely of circle straffing and mashing the attack button. When not loading or fighting, the rest of your time is spent pulling levers, which open doors to rooms with more levers. This monotony is occasionally interrupted by some clever touches

■ There's little reason to play *Rune* — very little

like the brilliant *Loki* maze towards the end, but it isn't enough to get the game back on its feet.

— Jim Preston

ENextGen ★★☆☆☆**Bottom Line:** Another disc on the already enormous heap of mediocre PS2 games.

■ PLAYSTATION 2

NCAA Football 2002

■ Publisher: EA Sports ■ Developer: Tiburon Studios

Still a winner



■ EA Sports continues to get better with every iteration of its football franchises, and NCAA 2002 is no exception

➔ Poor Tiburon Studios. The Orlando, FL-based developer toils quietly down there in the humidity while making the Madden and NCAA Football titles for EA Sports. Those games don't make magazine covers and blowout previews, but the simple fact is that last year's Madden Football 2001 for PS2 was one of the best sports games made for any platform. So it is really no surprise the NCAA Football 2002 is another brilliant and near-flawless football game.

The title is naturally based on the same engine that's under the hood of this year's Madden game. Graphically, it's simply superb. From the player textures and animations to the sideline antics of the mascots, everything about the game



looks great. They've also fixed the players' chilling, soulless eyes from last year's Madden. Even the play-by-play commentary is surprisingly good.

While playing offense or defense, the controls are smooth and intuitive. The running game is fun to play but difficult to master and really does set up the passing game. The AI hums intelligently at all four difficulty levels and will give any football fan a workout. There are the usual Exhibition, Season, and Dynasty modes, but if that isn't enough to keep college pigskin fans happy, the Campus Challenges will reward players with over 250 special cards for completing gridiron tasks.

Quite simply, this game has everything a college fan would want, from the option play to the Top 25 rankings and 26 bowl games to the Heisman award at the end of the season. It is awesome.

— Jim Preston

■ The AI is so good, these players are probably smarter than genuine college jocks

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: Undoubtedly the best college football game available for any system.

PLAYSTATION 2 **Finals**

Silent Scope 2

■ Platform: PlayStation 2 ■ Publisher: Konami ■ Developer: Konami

Here's a novel idea: take an arcade gun game and port it to a home console with no light gun support. That kind of politically correct idiocy produced the original Silent Scope, which was so stupefyingly easy it hardly mattered that the Dual Shock control scheme was awful, because you could beat the game anyway. But it's still the thinking behind this sequel, which is, as sequels tend to be, a lot harder. The result is a blueprint for frustration.

To wit, you use the analog stick to scroll the crosshairs around the screen at a fixed speed, toggling in and out of

sniper mode with one of the shoulder buttons. Since a lot of enemies run back and forth (or occasionally circle around you), this brings up the frightfully common occurrence of enemies moving faster than the scope can. It is possible to adjust the scope speed at the options screen, but a faster scope is a less-easily-targeted one. This was just a bad decision all around.

The graphics are pretty bland, with occasional



■ You know, a gun game really needs to have a gun

slowdown. The characters are laughable, and the best thing you can say about the dialogue is that it's better than Zero Wing. — Jeff Lundrigan

NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Bottom Line: This is just a waste of anyone's time and money.

Time Crisis II

■ Platform: PlayStation 2 ■ Publisher: Namco ■ Developer: Namco

Among the tiny flood of gun games recently, Time Crisis II for PS2 is easily the best of the bunch. It still isn't that deep, but it can be a lot of fun for an afternoon or three.

Gameplay doesn't vary from the previous Time Crisis: Shoot stuff, and remember to dodge and reload on occasion. Although it's compatible with the original PlayStation Guncon, for an extra \$20 you can also pick up the Guncon 2, which is smaller, has the buttons in better positions, and is actually a great peripheral.

As gun games go this is

good stuff, if short, with plenty of challenge, nice-looking (but not exceptional) graphics, and lots of targets. Replayability is extended by a number of unlockable challenge modes, and in two-player mode you have the option of using a split screen or connecting two PS2s via the iLink cable and playing on two different screens — not the most accessible configuration.



■ Time Crisis II gets the gun game thing down — if only it lasted a little longer

tion for most, but a nice available option. — Jeff Lundrigan

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: Much as we love gun games, even the best of them have limited staying power. Time Crisis II is great for what it is, but it's no exception to the rule.

World Destruction League: War Jetz

■ Platform: PlayStation 2 ■ Publisher: 3DO ■ Developer: 3DO

This airborne follow up to VDL: Thunder Tanks uses its TV-game-show backdrop pretty well (the Steve Buscemi look-alike host is actually quite funny), but the action loses its appeal long before the end.

The idea is to defeat the gang in charge of each territory (New York, Antarctica, Australia, etc.), thereby gaining new aircraft. There's a nice selection of planes and arenas, but the levels all blend together after the first few. Yes, they do vary in goals, such as collecting cash, or returning flags to your base,

but they usually blow down to blasting the enemy and just about everything else. The arenas themselves are way too constricting, with a very low flight ceiling. Much of your time is spent bouncing off walls or watching that annoying blue-wave effect that tells you you're flying too high.

The graphics are average at best, and some areas are far



■ War Jetz won't set the world on fire, but it's fun enough for a while

too dark. It's also hard to get your bearings at times with the game's third-person view. The saving grace is that the control is excellent, and special moves can be pulled off at the touch of a button. — Rob Smolka

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: There's a lot to see and do, but the bell-shaped fun curve peaks too soon, and you'll likely lose interest before the end.



■ Because nothing beats advanced alien technology like a good, old-fashioned tank, right?

■ DREAMCAST

Alien Front Online

■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: Wow Entertainment

The only good alien...

→ It's human-driven tanks versus mech-like aliens in a third-person action battle to the finish. That's essentially the entire gist of Sega's latest arcade port, *Alien Front Online*. Don't let the title fool you, though; there's a decent amount of single-player action available to prepare you for the inevitable battles you'll wage via modem against other sentient beings.

Whichever side you choose, you will be tasked with making sure those human/alien scum don't live to tell the tale. The alien environments are suitably creepy, with organic-looking, pulsating walls and weirdly reflective water. Back on Earth, the fighting will take place in more familiar environs such as building-lined city streets. One notably cool effect is that when a weapon blast hits an area of a building, its



■ The game even lets you fight and talk at the same time facade will crumble. Unfortunately, you can't completely knock down the buildings with further blasts. Overall, the graphics are detailed enough to get the job done, but Dreamcast is capable of much more.

Each side has three levels of vehicles/creatures to choose from — light, medium, and heavy — with the obvious advantages and disadvantages for whichever you choose. The controls



are smooth and responsive, and the shoulder buttons allow you to pull off nifty circle-strafe maneuvers. Online play proved virtually lag-free, and the added bonus of being able to actually talk with your teammates and/or opponents (with the included microphone) adds a much needed dimension to what would otherwise be a standard deathmatch.

— Rob Smolka

■ NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: It's not terribly original, but the basics are solid enough to make it fun, especially when you can taunt your foes and coordinate your attack with teammates online.

Coaster Works

■ Platform: Dreamcast ■ Publisher: Xicat Interactive

■ Developer: BimboSoft

Coaster Works has a nice engine, which delivers an absolutely visceral, 60fps, full-color, first-person coaster-riding experience. Test rides in this engine are a much needed way to re-energize after meticulously laying out a coaster in the tragically utilitarian construction screen — a four-pane, spitscreen affair that displays your coaster in wireframe from four views: top, first-person, side, and front.

Unfortunately, there's hardly any game here. You only build five roller coasters of varying complexity, thus unlocking a bonus stage where you can build one (count 'em: one) more coaster, free of mission parameters. That's it. If you want to build anything more, you must erase an existing coaster. Also, the



■ Coaster Works can be fun while it lasts — which isn't long — but still ain't worth much

construction interface seems designed to hinder your progress, refusing to test a coaster before the track is completely laid, but forcing you to completely erase and reconstruct huge portions of track in order to add or delete even a single segment. Finally, the game seriously lacks atmosphere, a near-fatal flaw in this genre.

— Eric Bratcher

■ NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: The engine is fast (though graphically bland), but a trip to a real amusement park would cost about the same and last longer than four hours. Plus, you could buy corn dogs and funnel cake.

Outtriggar

■ Platform: Dreamcast ■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: AM2

Outtriggar is the answer to the question, "What do you get when you cross the fast-paced shooter action of Quake with the target practice aspects of Virtua Cop and throw in a dash of coin collection from Super Mario?" Unfortunately, whether in the (default) third- or first-person mode, the only part of the single-player game worth mentioning is the shooter bit.

The excuse for all the killing (otherwise known as the story line) is that you're a member of an anti-terrorist group. The standard shooter-style missions are decent (if you can come to grips with the extremely awkward Dreamcast controller layout — mouse and keyboard are definitely preferred), but the various playing fields are just too cramped. Other mission types require you to do things like shoot at terrorist targets (that pop up like ducks in a shooting gallery) or run around collecting gold medals. This is every bit as exciting as it sounds (i.e. it's not).



■ Outtriggar is a painless time-waster when played online — offline, it's just kinda dull

But the day is saved by the multiplayer options. Though all four of you will be stuck with a standard controller, the four-way spitscreen option is great fun, with framelines remaining high. Likewise, the online play was smooth enough to enjoy, though a bit laggy (especially when multiple weapon blasts occur simultaneously). We do feel, however, that broadband users (this is one of the few games that take advantage of Dreamcast's network card peripheral) might have an advantage over their dial-up opponents. But as they say, all's fair in war and, uh, war.

— Rob Smolka

■ NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: A good-looking, competent addition to the roster of Dreamcast shooters. Deduct a star, however, if you don't plan on being social.

Motocross Mania

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Take 2 Interactive**

■ Developer: **Delbus Studios**

Motocross Mania originally entered the world as an average, value-priced PC game and now makes its return as a PlayStation port — in other words, a rather pricey coaster.

What began as a bare-bones physics model has been stripped down to the marrow. You might as well be controlling a scooter, tank, or gyrocopter for all the personality that's established here. Riders merely turn and burn, with no concession to shifts in weight or screeching powerslides. Even more risible are the unpredictable landings, which are so random that even rival AI-controlled riders eat dirt like earthworms on a binge.

For all the features it offers (cash-based upgrades, championships, tuning, etc.), not a one is fully realized. In keeping with the low-grade visual atmosphere and standard bike race sound bites,



■ *Motocross Mania* is as cheap as they come and plays as bad as that sounds

each of the many available options looks and feels cheap. Admittedly, at a bargain price of 10 bucks, you can't demand much from a slipshod port. But it is really too much to ask for menus that use graphical representations in lieu of numbers and butt-ugly slider bars?

On PC, this faced almost no competition. Going head to head against real console contenders though, *Motocross Mania* quickly falls behind the pack. Save your money and buy an oil change instead. — Scott Steinberg

■ **NextGen** ★☆☆☆☆

Bottom Line: A stripped-down racer running on fumes — which is exactly what you'd have to be inhaling before purchasing this game.

Tales of Destiny 2

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Namco** ■ Developer: **Namco**

With solid RPGs like *FF Chronicles* and *Saiyuki* available lately for PlayStation, Namco now enters the fray with its own *Tales of Destiny 2*. Excellent localization, an intriguing battle system, and colorful graphics make it a worthy addition to any RPG fan's PlayStation library.

We've all heard this story before: young, reluctant hero and his tomboy love interest/childhood friend discover a mysterious female stranger and set out on a quest to learn the stranger's origin/save the world. But what makes *ToD2* (and other good RPGs) stand out are the quality of their characters and storytelling. Reid, Farah, and Meredy (the lead trio) are all endearing and wonderfully developed with humor, random dialogue, and amusing events. This makes it possible to weather through three discs of otherwise stock RPG elements.

The game is also helped by its



■ **Graphics snobs need not apply; it's the cast of characters that make this shine**

unique, side-scrolling 2D battle system that emphasizes the player's dexterity, à la *Street Fighter*, in order to pull off combos and skills. Challenging but fun, the combat engine is more refined over the one found in the original.

And while the lame voice acting may threaten to drive you insane, the battle system and characters more than make up for it (plus, the voices can thankfully be turned off). *ToD2* is a sure bet and a worthy diversion. — Francesca Reyes

■ **NextGen** ★★★★★

Bottom Line: Good localization ensures an enjoyable romp through a traditional RPG world. Just make sure to turn those stupid voice tracks off.

PLAYSTATION **Finals**



■ *Saiyuki* is as fine a strategy RPG as you could ask for

■ **PLAYSTATION**

Saiyuki: Journey West

■ Publisher: **Koei** ■ Developer: **Fu-Qi**

Buddha and the Beast

→ *Saiyuki* chronicles the travels of Sanzo, a young Chinese monk charged with delivering a sacred staff to a faraway temple in India. Of course, this being a *Final Fantasy Tactics*-style strategy RPG, it's not an easy task. By journey's end, you will have led an entire battalion of magical were-warriors; Sanzo will have learned to summon the spiritual guardians of Heaven (ironically similar to *Persona*'s demons); and the staff will be revealed as the tool of an army of devils bent on

destroying Buddha himself.

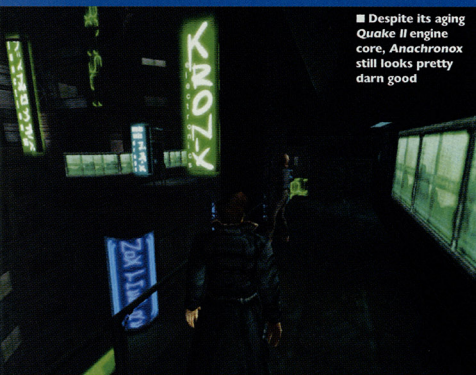
Nearly everything about *SjW* is top-notch. The characters boast actual personalities, ranging from the aggressive, hotheaded Monkey King Son Goku, to Sa Gojo, the tortured, once-human Lord of the River. The story is minimal but still quite meaningful; the battlefields are varied and well crafted; and the combat engine is nicely comprehen-

sive. Aside from the opinion that the characters should be able to spend more time in their various were-forms, we have only a single, albeit huge, complaint: the incredibly dated graphics engine, which would have looked average three years ago. But in the end, *Saiyuki* shares its subject matter's timeless appeal and will thrill anyone who can look past the surface. — Eric Bratcher

■ **NextGen** ★★★★★

Bottom Line: It won't dazzle your eyes, but with compelling characters, a unique setting and plot, and nice tactical depth, it's still a grand experience.





■ Despite its aging Quake II engine core, *Anachronox* still looks pretty darn good

■ PC Anachronox

■ Publisher: Eidos ■ Developer: ION Storm

Genre buster, or just bust?

→ Mixing elements of role-playing, adventure, and action games, Tom Hall's *Anachronox* is a flawed gem. You initially take the role of Sly Boots, a down-on-his-luck private eye, and the story itself is worth the price of admission.

Although ultimately successful at its genre blending, each is applied rather generically. The RPG aspects include leveling and typical delivery boy quests. The adventure parts are basically scavenger hunts. The action, mostly in realtime, is all about learning new maps and battling through hordes of enemies.

The good side is that there's always something to do. The downside is that it's not always well balanced. There's a lot of backtracking to areas that are locked until specific actions are taken. Just when you've had enough adventuring, though, the game will switch to action or open up another quest. It walks the fine line of tedium,



■ The always interesting storyline keeps you on your toes

but it always keeps moving and keeps you interested.

Graphically, *Anachronox* is a mixed bag. Any game in development this long is going to suffer somewhat visually, although it should be noted that many of the particle and spell effects are fantastic. As your party grows and begins to explore outside the city, the level of detail is sometimes bewildering, although much of it is window dressing — doors that can't be opened, shops that can't be entered, etc.

The world of *Anachronox* is darkly comic and cynical. While some of it is at a grade-school level of humor, there's plenty for more mature folks as well. Combined with the interesting mix of genres, this becomes an enjoyable romp through a bizarre, almost living world. It's a keeper. — Kevin Rice

■ NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: Although a little blemished, *Anachronox* serves up a unique and exciting world with plenty of twists. Recommended.

Alone In The Dark: The New Nightmare

■ Platform: PC ■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Developer: Darkworks

The *Alone In The Dark* series began in 1992 as a DOS game starring a middle-aged private detective, Edward Camby — but how things change. Almost 10 years later, a much younger Edward returns, and you can even play as either Camby or Aline Cedrac, the tough female professor who joins him.

As a PC title that got its start on PlayStation, the worst problem here is that it never shakes its console origins. It controls horribly without a gamepad, but even then the controls aren't very smooth, and there's no mouse support.

The camera also has a habit of swiveling to bad locations at the most inconvenient times, and in order to save, you have to collect console-esque "save amulets" (groan).

Which doesn't mean this is all bad. The storyline is spooky and reasonably gripping, the voice acting is decent, and the music fits the eerie setting. Graphics and lighting effects are also top-notch (and quite a bit



■ With no gun, the flashlight is Aline's best hope against this monstrosity

better than the kludge-y PlayStation version). The lighting is even relevant to gameplay because some creatures are scared of light, and Edward and Aline can use their flashlights to send monsters scuttling back into the dark. — Carla Harker

■ NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: Despite its faults, very few PC games provide these kinds of Lovecraftian thrills and chills. *The New Nightmare* suffices.

Arcanum: Of Steamworks & Magick Obscura

■ Platform: PC ■ Publisher: Sierra ■ Developer: Troika Games

Troika was founded by the creators of *Fallout*, so it's no surprise that *Arcanum* is one of the better RPGs released this year. It's set in a pseudo-Victorian fantasy world where traditional elves and magic spells are found alongside the technology of pistols and cameras. Also, the game doesn't have any character classes, thanks to a character generation system that's one of the most complex and complete ever seen. True, it's confusing at first, but the virtually unlimited possibilities of the

open-ended system are likely to entice any fan of the genre.

The terrain and object graphics are good, but the character graphics are terrible. The sound more than makes up for this, however. From the interesting voice actors to the beautifully haunting classical Victorian music, the sound is some of the best we've ever heard in a computer game.



■ A proper Victorian lady always dresses nicely, even when delving in mines

Arcanum provides dozens of hours of exciting play. With the added bonuses of a world editor and multiplayer, it's a must-have. — Carla Harker

■ NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: An in-depth and engaging role-playing game that deviates from the traditional fantasy setting.

Legends of Might and Magic

■ Platform: PC ■ Publisher: 3DO ■ Developer: New World Computing

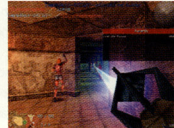
Might and Magic is known for its superior *Heroes* series of strategy games and its once-good-lately-bad series of RPGs. Now 3DO adds team-based action to the brand, but really, they shouldn't have bothered.

Legends enables players to choose one of six character classes and team up against other players in any of four scenario types. It's like a medieval *Counter-Strike*, but instead of rescuing hostages, you're rescuing the princess.

However, since it's possible to win by ignoring the objective

and killing the other team, scenarios tend to quickly degenerate into simple deathmatches.

Still, the main problem with *Legends* is its lack of originality. Almost everything about it, from the Buy option at the beginning to the Spectator mode when you're killed, is based on other better games. The inclusion of random monsters tends to be more annoying than cool, and most



■ Tag, you're it

game hosts turn them off. Nothing is inherently wrong here, but it really is more like a *Counter-Strike* mod than an original title. — Carla Harker

■ NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Unoriginal and uninspiring, this team-based FPS is not the stuff of legends.



■ Don't let the beauty of the surroundings fool you. Those guys with the guns would like nothing better than to fill you full of lead

■ PC

Desperados — Wanted Dead or Alive

■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Developer: Spellbound

Hi-oh Silicon, away!

➔ If *Desperados* proves anything, it's that game developers have been foolish not to take full advantage of the rich tableau provided by the classic Western setting. Despite "borrowing" many of its gameplay conventions directly from Eidos' *Commandos*, this action-strategy game manages to stand apart thanks to its excellent story, creative character traits, and, most importantly, Western theme.

The 25 missions that tell the story (with great cut scenes in between) pack enough action to fill a dozen John Wayne movies. All of the six characters you eventually control have their own unique abilities that must be used to puzzle your way through shootouts, rescues, and stealth missions as you try to solve the underlying mystery



■ Many of the levels are huge, with varying elevation

of a series of train robberies and to reap the \$15,000 reward. Unlike *Commandos*, though, there isn't an exact path you need to follow to win; creativity and a dab of serendipity are just as likely to see you through.

Thumbing its nose at 3D, *Desperados* is chock-full of gorgeous 2D graphics and neat animations. Even on the highest resolution (1024 x 768), though, things get a tad blocky when using the closest camera setting. The majority of the voice acting and sound effects are also top-notch, and the story line will hook you and keep you involved.

Perhaps the only downside is the difficulty and length of many of the missions. Casual gamers or the merely impatient will be forced to deal with failure a lot. Even veterans will face a few roadblocks from time to time that will have to be dealt with on a trial-and-error basis. Some of this has to do with an interface that can be a bit clunky, but even after it's mastered, the odds in some of the missions are sometimes overwhelming. — Rob Smalka

ENextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: This gets an extra star just for being that rare Western-themed game that does justice to its source. Stick with it through the tough times, or you'll miss out on a great story and a stable full of action.

Shattered Galaxy

■ Platform: PC ■ Publisher: Nexon ■ Developer: Nexon

The next time you feel like invading outer space with a few hundred friends, you could do worse than *Shattered Galaxy*, a new persistent online universe. When an alien artifact, the Fata Morgana, accidentally teleports great chunks of the Earth across the cosmos, the scattered surviving humans must fight for their lives.

Players begin by creating a hero and joining a planetary faction. Battles occur when you invade a sector and try to occupy an enemy PoC (Point of Contention), an area shaped like a pie chart. If you hold the

PoC until all segments light up, you've won. If not, the skirmish ends in failure. As many as 30 gamers can join each skirmish.

The more time you can play, the better, since play time pays off in experience points, leading to higher ranks and better units. But the game is designed for newbies as well, who learn at home base, a safe area, then start against other rookies or under protection



■ Hostile alien worlds and ubiquitous lava pools abound in *Shattered Galaxy*

from an experienced old-timer. Naturally, teamwork is vital, and players keep in touch through a great chat system. It's a cool way to make friends. Or enemies. — John Lee

ENextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: If you'd like to capture chunks of pie-charted landscapes, this is a decent persistent online game. Teamwork required.

Startopia

■ Platform: PC ■ Publisher: Eidos ■ Developer: Mucky Foot

What's this? A hotel management game? Ah, but this hotel is different: It's floating in deep space. *Startopia* whisks you to a derelict space station to build luxury quarters to accommodate a variety of alien races.

A sophisticated strategy game full of sneaky humor, it contains the usual accouterments of realtime strategy with trade, economy, and the standard RTS production tree. You start with basic structures on three decks and move to better things as you collect energy and learn new technologies. There's a working deck with sickbay, research labs, and cargo. The pleasure deck has discos, love nests,

and fancy hotels. And finally there's a biosphere, where alien farmers grow crops.

It may sound standard, but it isn't — the quirky aliens keep it fresh. There are nine wildly disparate species, each with specific traits and behavior. Greys, for example, are healers and buzz around the sickbay. Shapely Sirens are love machines, experts at giving pleasure. You'll also meet warlike Kasvorigians, waddling Gruelian Salt Hogs, aristocratic Polvakian Gem Slugs, and



■ Not all aliens look like crabs or nine-foot-tall Wookies

other oddball critters.

The game contains 10 missions with specific objectives, plus a Sandbox mode for open-ended play. Ten missions is a bit short, so you'll probably end up in the Sandbox mode sooner than you want. Even so, you'll have a boatload of fun getting there. — John Lee

ENextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: Although a bit short on missions, it turns out to be a real kick to build your own luxury hotel in space.

Z: Steel Soldiers

■ Platform: PC ■ Publisher: Eon Digital ■ Developer: Bitmap Brothers

Remember Z? It was a dandy game, robots against robots, with an emphasis on quirky humor and territorial control, but it had the misfortune of appearing about the same time as *Red Alert*. Oops.

Well, take heart, Z zealots. Captain Zod is back, raspy voice, wry humor, and all. Even better, this time there's a nicely realistic 3D environment.

The objective is to protect your command center, churn out troops, and blast the enemy before he blasts you. Sound familiar? Maybe, but

here, there are no resources to gather. To keep cranking out units, you must capture enemy territories to increase your credits. This driving need to acquire more territory shoves combat to the fore, ratcheting up the pace.

Okay, so there's nothing radically new here; even the rugged 3D maps have already been done. But *Steel Soldiers*



■ Zod is back, and he's looking mighty fine

is still pretty enjoyable, with neat atmosphere and cool explosions, and it's well worth a look. — John Lee

ENextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: A boisterous 3D realtime strategy melee, with action, robot management, and rugged terrain, but you've seen much of it elsewhere.



Letters

Bwrite and early

➔ In the *Virtua Fighter 4* preview of your August issue, I noticed the implication by Suzuki that the graphic richness of *VF4* will have to be trimmed back for the PS2 version. I'm no tech buff, but I thought that PS2's Emotion Engine was more powerful than Sega's Naomi 2 board (at least as far as polygon processing power goes). At first I thought that it might be PS2's low texture memory that is the problem, but after seeing the incredibly realistic *GT3* (as well as the CG-like *FFX*), I really don't see how PS2 can't handle *VF4* (or any other current game for that matter). Can you shed some light on this for me?

"FlyGuyLX"
Via email

While you're correct that PS2's Emotion Engine can push a lot of polygons, it's not quite in the same league as Naomi 2. And, while it's true that *GT3* looks "incredibly realistic," it also deals with inanimate objects, set in (generally) relatively simple outdoor environments. Cars don't really require huge, detailed textures (especially if, as in *GT3*, you don't show damage, corrosion, or wear). Something like *VF4* on the other hand, includes realistic, human characters and rather complex environments, all of which require a lot of texturing, something PS2 has a little trouble with given its relatively modest 4MB of texture memory. You can stream it off the disc (like *FFX*, we believe), but depending on the game, the type of scene, and how the texture data is used, that's not always feasible. Naomi 2 can also handle 10 simultaneous light sources, which is a bit beyond PS2's abilities too. So, *VF4* will have to be trimmed a bit — not as much as previous home conversions, but some.

➔ What's happened to all of your Dreamcast news? Your big *E3* article only had a small

screenshot of the booth with no Sega information at all and your previews section ignores great upcoming games like *Outtrigger*, *Shenmue II*, *Bomberman Online*, *Propeller Arena*, and *Phantasy Star Online Ver.2*. I have yet to see a *Sonic Adventure 2* cover story, which the game richly deserves. One of the most overused lines in articles are "since the Dreamcast is dead..." No wonder gamers seem to be forgetting about Dreamcast — it's because your magazine doesn't give it the coverage it deserves.

"Möbiusmecha"
Via email

We're really sorry to break this to you, but Dreamcast pretty much is dead. We'll continue to cover those games in the works that we feel are noteworthy (see the *Shenmue II* preview in *NG 09/01*) and will review every title we can until there aren't any more. However, the fact is that Sega has ceased production and no one is planning anything new for us to cover. Frankly, if it were simply down to the coverage *Next Gen* has given Dreamcast, the system would have outsold any other competitor — we did give Sega "Best Booth of Show" for E3 2000, and did several major cover stories before, during, and after Dreamcast launched. Sorry again, but there just isn't very much Dreamcast news anymore.

➔ In *NG 08/01* in the feature about Xbox, you mentioned that the Xbox hard drive will be 10GB, but in a letter in the same issue you said it was 8GB. Could you clarify this?

Brendan Murphy
Via email

The feature you mention wasn't a feature, it was a "special advertising section" (and labeled as such) for *Imagine's* upcoming *Official Xbox Magazine*. However, the ad had it right. Although 8GB was the hard

drive size given in Microsoft's original Xbox specs, the actual Xbox will have a 10GB drive — something that was announced back during Tokyo Game Show, actually. It was our slip, and you caught it. The editor in question has been asked if he would like to keep eight or 10 fingers in hopes he doesn't "slip" again.

➔ I was reading through *NG 08/01* and saw the preview of *Dead to Rights* on page 30. I thought it sounded awesome and was looking forward to playing it in the future when I noticed the advertisement for *Max Payne*. Is it just me or do these two games seem exactly alike? Both say they introduce the slow-motion effect, both star an undercover cop accused of murder, and both are supposed to be excellent action games. What's up?

Nick Vollmer
Via email

No, it's not just you. Whether through synchronicity or (more likely) just plain jump-on-the-bandwagon copycatting, at least three games we know of are aiming for what is generally known as "John Woo-style

action." Named, of course, after famous Hong Kong (now U.S.) action movie director John Woo, and his signature use of highly stylized, choreographed action and slow motion. You can read our review of *Max Payne* on page 72, and yes, *Dead to Rights* should be along in early 2002. Interestingly enough, we know that John Woo himself has gotten involved in the game-making process, serving as a consultant and designer on an as-yet-unnamed project with Digital Rim/Rainbow Studios.

➔ I have a couple of friends that were avid readers of *Next Gen* magazine. However, they recently decided that *Next Gen* was boycotting Nintendo's GameCube, and so they would stop reading it. Both are diehard Nintendo fans (as am I), but even when you featured *Rogue Leader* on GameCube, they said it was too late. I told them that your lack of GameCube coverage was due to Nintendo's secrecy, and that your issues are planned so far in advance that you couldn't get GameCube into your June magazine. But it's no use. While people are people, and I believe

CRACKERS!

Is it just me, or does Luigi in the GameCube game resemble Wallace from *Wallace & Gromit*?

Ronald Polenske
Via email

We're pretty sure it's just you.



■ Does Luigi look at all like Wallace? You decide...

that the majority of your editors might not favor Nintendo, I seriously doubt that your news and reviews magazine would boycott a major player like Nintendo.

Ed Price
Bellevue, WA

You're right. GameCube has presented some problems for us. Getting information out of Nintendo has been difficult, and until the system launches, Nintendo is keeping its cards (and screenshots) close to its chest. But we do run a regular GameCube column every month (see GameCube Watch, page 16), and we cover everything we can about the system in as much space as we can. We're sorry if that doesn't seem like enough for some people, but we refuse to bang the drum needlessly for any company, and we don't think our coverage has been notably lacking compared with anyone else's, especially when you consider that we showed the world the first official in-game, GameCube screenshots in our *Rogue Leader* story.

➔ Judging from the maturity level of Charlie Wood's gushing letter about another *Star Wars* game (NG 08/01), I'd say that if filmmaker doesn't work out for him, he can always fall back on his other choices, cowboy or fireman. This is exactly what contributes to mediocre products: mooning, starry-eyed fanboys running out to buy the latest *SW/Zelda/Tomb Raider* (insert other tired franchise here) piece of garbage, not caring about total lack of originality as long as they can be in on the craze. You see Charlie, since *Star Wars* came out over 20 years ago, most of us have given up our boyhood fantasies of being Luke Skywalker. But you and the millions like you are just out to relive your childhood through children's games, and as long as game companies know you're out there, they'll keep making pap. Meanwhile, games for adults, with good plotting, engaging characters, fierce action, and stories that didn't come off cereal boxes will continue to languish, passed over for the latest *Ewoks* game, or *Simjawa*.

Chris Corsi
Via email

And some of us grow up and

TEKKEN IT OUT

In the article about *Tekken 4* in NG 08/01 it's stated that Paul Phoenix, King, Marshall Law, and Hwoarang are already confirmed to be in the game. But nowhere was there any mention of Lei Wulong returning to the roster. It would be greatly appreciated if an updated character list could be provided, or at least if Lei will be making a return. And when is *Tekken 4* supposed to be released here in the States? Is there any plan for *Tekken Tag Tournament* or *Tekken 4* to make its way to GameCube?

Nick Long
Via email

Sorry Nick, but no word from Namco yet on

a U.S. console release date (other than "2002"), and also no word on possible GameCube versions. Nor is there mention of Lei Wulong making a return — at least, not as of this writing (the day before the actual arcade game is to ship in Japan). The official lineup at present is: Paul Phoenix, King, Hwoarang, Ling Xiaoyu, Kazuya Mishima, Yoshimitsu, Marshall Law, and new characters Christie Monteiro (Brazil, Capoeira), Craig Marduke (U.S., Vale Tudo), and Steve Fox (U.K., boxing). It should be noted, however, that the character-select screen has slots for 20 fighters, so who knows who else could be in there?



■ The "official" initial lineup of selectable characters in *Tekken 4*

get jobs playing games for a living, but that's another story...

➔ I recently bought Atari Anniversary Edition for Dreamcast. Not only does it contain 12 Atari classics (including *Pong*), it also has some very good info about the company, and is well worth the \$15. It includes over 30 minutes of an interview with Atari founder, Nolan Bushnell. They mention that he is considered to be the "father of the videogame industry." Now, I have no disrespect for Bushnell or his accomplishments but I must hear it from you guys: Do you consider him to be the "father" of the videogame industry?

Albert Ayala
Via email

Absolutely. While Bushnell didn't "invent" videogames (that honor goes to a group of MIT students who created *Spacewar!* on a TX-0, then a PDP-1 in 1961), he definitely founded our industry — *Pong* and Atari were where this industry got its start.

entertainment is poised to exceed the movie industry. If this is true, then what I find ironic is the complaints that videogame budgets are growing in comparison to earlier consoles. For example, *Metal Gear Solid 2* is predicted to check in at the range of \$5 to \$10 million. But compared to a movie budget, often in the \$80- to \$100-million range, it's chump change. My question is: Are game developers willing to accept that higher development costs are a result of the rise in technology and the mainstreaming of gaming in general, or is the spiraling increase in the money and time required a legitimate concern?

Kevin Halse
Via email

The often touted statistic that the videogame industry is (or soon will be) generating more revenue than the movie industry (we've even said it here at *Next Gen* a few times) is somewhat misleading. The numbers are actually the total earned by the

entire U.S. videogame industry, versus domestic gross box office (which last year were both in the \$7- to \$8-billion range). However, obviously the movie industry has many, many other sources of revenue — home video, sales to cable and syndicated TV, foreign distribution, product placement, licensing, and so on, which can multiply by many times the amount a given film will earn. Videogames, on the other hand, don't have nearly as many ancillary markets — realistically speaking, you get maybe six months of shelf time to earn back your investment, and then you're done. Worse, much of the revenue taken in by games every year, especially in the console markets (sometimes as much as 90%), will be gobbled up by the top 10 or 15 titles, and everyone else gets what's left. The good news is that the audience for games is getting larger every year, so even modest hits can make money, but throwing \$5 or \$10 million at a title is still a huge gamble.



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→ Retroview

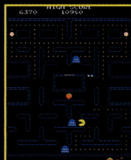
October 1980

The pizza that took a slice out of the world

→ Sometimes, the industry just gets it wrong. Such was the case in late 1980, when arcade operators at the annual Amusement Machine Operators Association (AMOA) show declared Namco/Midway's Rally X to be the next big thing.

There were two big problems with this endorsement. The first was Williams' *Defender* — a hyperactive, side-scrolling space shooter that was deemed too confusing. Industry insiders scoffed at the brutal level of difficulty and bewildering control panel that included a joystick and five action buttons. But arcade patrons embraced the machine, establishing *Defender* designer Eugene Jarvis as a world-class game creator.

The second problem was, of course, Namco/Midway's own *Pac-Man*. The character's shape came to



■ *Pac-Man* became (and remains) the best-selling arcade machine of all time

creator Toru Iwatani while he was eating a pizza. The game itself was inspired by a Japanese nursery rhyme about a small creature that ate evil beings, and it granted players control over *Pac-Man* (known as *Puck-Man* in Japan), who sought to consume pellets strewn about a maze infested with hostile, roaming ghosts. Operators deemed the game far too cute to be successful in the bombastic arcade market, but starting in November, *Pac-Man*'s sparse diet would nonetheless expand to include millions of quarters.

INSIDE: The Ultimate Intellivision Launch Guide

→ NextGen

Next Generation Magazine



The Rumor Mill

Battlezone — does the Army really train with it?
Star Castle — what image do the background stars form?
Zork — what is taking over the MIT mainframe?
We uncover the truth!

40 GAMES REVIEWED!

Atari 2600: Space Invaders, Fishing Derby
 Arcade: Defender, Rally X
 Odyssey 2: Pachinko

ARCADE ■ ATARI ■ ODYSSEY ■ INTELLIVISION ■ APPLE

What we were playing

The golden age of arcades, and a classic series is born

■ PHOENIX



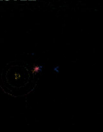
■ Platform: Arcade
 ■ Publisher: Taito/Centuri

■ NBA BASKETBALL



■ Platform: Intellivision
 ■ Publisher: Mattel

■ STAR CASTLE



■ Platform: Arcade
 ■ Publisher: Cinematronics

■ DRAGSTER



■ Platform: Atari 2600
 ■ Publisher: Activision

■ ULTIMA



■ Platform: Apple II
 ■ Publisher: California Pacific Computer

Billboard's Top Singles of 1980

Call Me

Another Brick in the Wall (Part 2)

Magic

Rock With You

Do That To Me One More Time

Crazy Little Thing Called Love

Coming Up

Funkytown

It's Still Rock & Roll to Me

The Rose

Blondie

Pink Floyd

Olivia Newton-John

Michael Jackson

The Captain and Tennille

Queen

Paul McCartney and Wings

Lipps, Inc.

Billy Joel

Bette Midler



...and in the real world

■ The motion picture *Airplane!* was released, including a scene where radar operators could be seen playing Atari's *Basketball* on a radar screen.

■ The new, fall TV season includes *Fridays*, a *Saturday Night Live* clone that featured a pre-Seinfeldian Michael Richards and Larry David; *Barbara Mandrell and the Mandrell Sisters*, which somehow married Charlie's Angels to Hee Haw; and *Magnum P.I.*, in which Tom Selleck proved it was actually possible to look studly while wearing a goofy Hawaiian shirt.

■ Post-it Notes debut, immediately reshaping modern communication. Despite the product's incredible success, it has a long and storied history: The notes' weak, permanently sticky adhesive had been invented by accident in 1968, and the inventor had spent over a decade trying to convince his employer 3M that it had a practical use.

■ Japan eclipses the U.S. as the world's largest automobile manufacturer; smallpox is declared eradicated by the World Health Organization; and the U.S. Supreme Court rules to allow patents to be granted for living organisms.

■ *The Empire Strikes Back* is the year's highest-grossing film, earning over \$290 million.



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A message from Blake: The church of Mountain Dew is now open for business. The day the Internet died left us drained and emotionally bereft. No story, no email, and for just no instant mess-
senger! "The horror!" (Quoted stolen from the extended re-release: Apocalypse Now Redux.) Secret Message to City B from Seamus B: "You have dishonored my family and must pay. We will meet at midnight in the center of the city. With my magic powers, I will deliver unto you a blessing which is truly...
BPA
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BackwardsCompatible

10/01

Sega's making GameCube games. Could one of them be a Miyamoto/Naka collaboration? Page 16.
Madden 2001 was amazing. Can Tiburon do the same thing for college ball? Page 77. **An American-developed game from Capcom? Spooky.** Page 32. A game thematically similar to *They Live*? That's cool, but it's no *Hell Comes to Frogtown*. Page 41. **Where do we get off calling Max Payne a pencil neck?** Page 72. Actually, one staff member thinks you're right. They do look alike. Page 100. **You know, if you're in the dark, and there are tons of evil beasts there, you aren't technically alone, are you?** Page 82.
Clearly, this list is wrong — no one from Next Gen is anywhere on it. Page 56. **Fantavision and Shaun Palmer — separated at birth?** Page 44. Can't get enough of our clever wit and incisive analysis? The web site's back up. Check out www.next-generation.com. **Don't you hate how the good guy always just arrests the bad guy instead of popping him? Here's your game.** Page 34. Incidentally, if we were to make a journey west of more than about five miles, we'd need some serious scuba gear. Page 81.
Someone should combine all these into one: skateboarding through a burning city, chopping things up with your talking guitar. Now there's a game! Page 75. This sounds great, but if we're ever told to clean up Uut patties, forget it. Page 28. **You know, if the Fire Department doesn't want you driving their trucks around, they really shouldn't leave the keys in them.** Page 43. Turns out, there's a very good reason for zoos not to house monkeys and tigers together. Page 45. **When the most powerful man in videogaming speaks, we listen.** Page 64. *Saving Private Ryan* — great movie, but wait until you play the game. Page 22. **Who wields more power: the Wizard, or the Emperor?** Page 63.

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■ Next month, Next Generation brings you the definitive launch guides for both Xbox and GameCube

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